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ABSTRACT

This major applied research project report describes the implementation of a program for grades 6-8 at an English language middle school in the Antilles Consolidated School System in Puerto Rico. The Ramey School students are the dependents of transient, active-duty military personnel, or civilian federal employees. The program sought to reduce student discipline referrals and suspensions and to improve student satisfaction. Other targets for improvement included students' standardized test scores, teacher use of cooperative learning groups in the classroom, and teachers' perceptions about the program's effectiveness. Program outcomes were evaluated by a review of student discipline referrals and suspensions, administration of student and teacher satisfaction surveys, and analysis of student achievement test scores. The following middle-school practices were implemented: block scheduling, exploratory classes, teacher teams, an advisor-advisee program, inservice training, and a student activities program. All targeted areas demonstrated improvement, showing a decline in discipline referrals and suspensions, improved student satisfaction, improved teacher attitudes toward the program's effectiveness, and increased teacher use of cooperative learning groups and teaming activities. Sixteen tables are included. Appendices contain copies of the surveys, descriptions of program activities, correspondence, and minutes from meetings. (LMI)

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# Reducing Discipline Referrals and Improving Student Satisfaction through the Implementation of Middle School Practices at Ramey School

by

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A Major Applied Research Project Report in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University
National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders
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## Abstract

### Reducing Discipline Referrals and Improving Student Satisfaction through the Implementation of Middle School Practices at Ramey School

This report describes the process used by a small unit school to implement a middle school program for grades 6-8. Areas of specific emphasis were reducing student discipline referrals and suspensions and improving student satisfaction. Other areas targeted for improvement were student standardized achievement test scores, teacher use of cooperative learning groups in the classrooms, and teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the middle school program.

This project resulted in the implementation of several key middle school practices advocated in the literature. The first two of these were the use of block scheduling and exploratory classes. The second established teacher teams with specific times for team meetings. Teams of middle school teachers worked cooperatively to establish common practices. Students became members of teams. An advisor-advisee program was another priority of this project. To assist teachers in implementing the program, in-service training included: (a) the nature of the young adolescent, (b) teaming, (c) advisor-advisee programs, and (d) cooperative learning. The final component of the project was the implementation of a student activities program.

As a result of this Major Applied Research Project, all targeted areas demonstrated improvement. Discipline referrals and suspensions for middle school students dropped. Student satisfaction surveys indicated a greater degree of student satisfaction in the following subscales: (a) teachers, (b) schoolwork, (c) student activities, (d) student discipline, (e) decision-making, and (f) communication. Teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the middle school program reflected improvement. Teacher use of cooperative learning groups and teaming activities also increased as a result of the project. Finally, standardized achievement test scores improved for middle school students.

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# Chapter 1

## Problem Statement and Community Background

### General Statement of Problem

As the principal of Ramey School, the manager of this Major Applied Research Project (MARP) was concerned about the number of students in grades 6 through 8 referred for discipline and subsequently suspended from classes. An additional concern was the lack of positive indicators in the key areas of schoolwork, student activities, and student discipline on the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Student Satisfaction Survey. The existing K through 12 program, practices, and organizational structure at Ramey School did not specifically target the unique age group and developmental needs of students in grades 6 through 8.

### Description of the Immediate Problem Context

Ramey School is one of six English language schools in the Antilles Consolidated School System operated by the federal government in Puerto Rico. The nearest school within the district is 90 miles away, near San Juan. This distance results in the school's isolation from other English language schools with a similar mission. Within the Antilles Consolidated School System, the grade-level organizational structure of the schools is dependent upon building size and enrollment of children.

In 1989, there were 425 students attending Ramey School

in kindergarten through grade 12. Grades 7 through 12 had departmentalized classes and were part of the high school. Clubs, social events, and services for grades 7 and 8 were those of the high school. Grades K through 6 were selfcontained; students in grade 6 were part of the elementary school.

Of the students, 60% speak Spanish as a first language. There are 2 administrators and 45 teachers. The largest class size at Ramey School is approximately 23 students. The largest grade-level enrollment is 48. The Ramey School campus includes 17 buildings set on 28 acres. Ramey School has excellent resources and spacious physical facilities.

Description of the Surrounding Communities

Ramey School students are the dependents of transient, active-duty military personnel, or civilian federal employees. These parents want an educational program that would permit successful transfer to stateside schools. All the families of Ramey students have at least one employed parent. Eighty percent of the students' mothers do not work outside the home. On the basis of federal government income guidelines, 7% of the students are eligible to receive free lunch and 17% are eligible for reduced-price lunch.

Spanish is the vernacular of Puerto Rico; this tends to isolate one-third of the English-speaking students living in a secured military compound, located less than a mile from the school. Most of the remaining students live within local Puerto Rican communities and speak Spanish most of the

time.

The governing body for the Antilles Consolidated School System is a school board elected by the parents. Funds to operate the schools and general administrative oversight are the responsibilities of the Department of Defense.

Ramey School is on the extreme northwest point of Puerto Rico where the Caribbean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. The island is some 100 by 35 miles in size. The culture and customs of the communities surrounding the school are Latin American with a strong influence from the mainland areas of the United States where Puerto Ricans have traditionally settled. Several Ramey faculty members returned to Puerto Rico after living in the United States, and many others are North Americans who have resided in Puerto Rico for many years. The remainder of the staff came from the Continental United States to teach at Ramey School. Most of the faculty live within a 5 mile radius of the school.

## Chapter 2

## Problem Definition and Evidence

### Problem Background

Though there has been national attention given to key recommendations for educating early adolescents (10-to-15 year-olds), Ramey School had not implemented these. Traditionally, Ramey students in grades 7 through 8 were part of the school's high school structure, while sixth graders were elementary students. One primary reason for this grade configuration was the small enrollment.

Middle school education received no special attention at Ramey School. The school had a history of administrator turnover, with five administrators serving in the last 10 years. The school's other problems overshadowed the issue of developing a specialized program for the middle grades. Three years of administrator stability resulted in solving major problem areas. These corrections cleared the way for focus on the educational program of the middle level student.

There had been significant changes in the Ramey School faculty during the 3 years prior to the implementation of the Major Applied Research Project (MARP). The MARP manager hired over 50% of the faculty. Of these, 24% were new positions added because of increased enrollment in the elementary school and new program requirements.

Participatory decision making regarding instructional

issues had directly involved the faculty during those 3 years. This process did not work particularly well during the manager's first year in the principalship. Many members of the faculty did not participate in the process. During the subsequent 2 years, the manager and the faculty committee learned how to work together as a team. The success of this process was evidenced by 12 individuals, not previously in instructional leadership positions, who volunteered to serve in this capacity during the 1989-1990 school year. One of these individuals commented:

> This committee really does make decisions about things that really matter to students. I'm not willing to work on committees that have no impact. This is worth my time.

The manager believed the Ramey faculty to be supportive of educational programs that benefited student learning outcomes. They demonstrated a willingness to work toward this goal.

Evidence of the Problem Discrepancy

Because student satisfaction both influences school success and corroborates it (Halderson, 1987), the MARP manager in May 1990 administered the National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) Student Satisfaction Survey to all students in grades 6 through 8. This instrument yielded data about student perceptions on eight subscales: (a) professional behaviors of teachers; (b) peer relationships; (c) range of courses and the nature of classwork; (d) numbers and types of school-sponsored

activities and opportunities for student participation; (e) degree to which the school is an orderly and safe environment; (f) opportunities to provide input on decisions about curriculum and school events; (g) availability of library resources, learning materials, and supplies and upkeep of the buildings and grounds; and (h) availability of information and opportunities to communicate with others about school events.

A task force of experts developed this Student Satisfaction Survey following an extensive review of the literature. The average reliability of the Student Satisfaction Survey subscales is 0.81, with a range from 0.76 to 0.83 (Halderson, 1987). To determine content validity, pilot studies and field tests of the items were conducted and subjected to factor analysis. Feedback from school personnel was obtained, and both empirical and rational considerations guided the development of the final instruments. Construct validity is concerned with the meaningfulness of a test. Student satisfaction is such a construct. Extensive use of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis in field testing ensured that only concepts and items with strong factor loadings were retained (Halderson, 1987).

The manager administered the Student Satisfaction Survey to class groups on a Tuesday and Wednesday. This was to avoid Monday or Friday as directed in the Examiner's Manual. Time for completion was adequate and uninterrupted,

with no student names recorded. Handscoring, using the directions in the Examiner's Manual, followed.

Table 1 shows responses for Ramey students in grades 6 through 8 on the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Student Satisfaction Survey (see Appendix A). Four indicators were lower than the national norm standard score of 50.

Table 1

Student Satisfaction Survey Summary Data Grades 6-8, May, 1990

| | National Norm Data | | School Data | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subscale Name | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Stand Score |
| Teachers | 24.0 | 4.9 | 24.1 | 4.3 | 50 |
| Fellow students | 17.2 | 3.8 | 18.1 | 3.7 | 52 |
| Schoolwork | 18.8 | 4.4 | 16.7 | 4.0 | 46 |
| Student activities | 18.1 | 4.1 | 16.6 | 4.9 | 47 |
| Student discipline | 20.1 | 4.6 | 19.1 | 3.8 | 48 |
| Decision-making Opportunities | 15.0 | 4.5 | 14.2 | 4.6 | 48 |
| Sch. bldg.,upkeep & supplies | 21.9 | 4.5 | 23.5 | 4.9 | 55 |
| Communication | 20.5 | 4.8 | 20.6 | 4.6 | 51 |

The second indicator of the problem discrepancy surfaced when the manager's review of discipline referrals for students in grades 4 through 12 revealed that students in grades 6 through 8 received 52% of the 224 referrals

during an 8-month period from August 1989 through April 1990. Of the students in grades 4 through 12 assigned in house and out-of-school suspensions during this time frame, 63% were in grades 6-8 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Discipline Referrals and Suspensions for Grades 4-12, August 1989 through April 1990

| Grade | # Referrals | % Referrals | # Suspen. | % Suspen. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 21 | 9% | 0 | 0% |
| 5 | 14 | 6% | 1 | 2% |
| 6 | 24 | 11% | 5 | 11% |
| 7 | 34 | 15% | 6 | 14% |
| 8 | 58 | 26% | 16 | 38% |
| 9 | 24 | 11% | 5 | 11% |
| 10 | 21 | 9% | 4 | 9% |
| 11 | 17 | 8% | 1 | 8% |
| 12 | 11 | 5% | 4 | 9% |

The assistant principal in charge of discipline at Ramey School made the following comment to the manager when asked about the large number of referrals and suspensions for the middle level students:

> I saw many more middle level students, particularly eighth graders. Generally referrals

> were for incidents of fighting, interpersonal relationship problems, defiance of authority, and repetitively breaking classroom and school rules. I could almost predict what offense some students had been referred for before I even read the form. The kids were so predictable. Unfortunately, their predictability was in a negative direction.

A review of the master schedule and course learning objectives for students in grades 6 through 8 revealed virtually no articulation of curriculum and courses. There were no objectives taught that addressed the need for these students to lead healthy lives, behave ethically, work cooperatively, and assume the responsibilities of good citizenship in our society.

Further evidence of this problem was recorded in January 1990, when an experienced educator, hired to provide staff development, conducted a demonstration class using an eighth-grade group. Her plans called for the utilization of cooperative learning groups. Following her lesson, she shared the following comment with the manager:

> These students are not ready to work in a cooperative group. They don't have a clue about cooperating or working toward a goal. Their behavior could only be controlled through the teacher's intervention and not by their ability to assume responsibility.

During the manager's formal observations of teachers in grades 6 through 8, there was no evidence of cooperative learning groups as an instructional strategy. These classrooms were in linear rows with the students' desks facing the teacher.

To determine teachers' perceptions of the problem, all the teachers of grades 6 through 8 completed a questionnaire

(see Appendix B) to determine current practices and perceptions regarding the middle level students and their educational program. In an attempt to control the content validity of the teacher questionnaire, the manager requested input from the following individuals: the three MARP observers, an elementary teacher, a middle school teacher, and two system level coordinators. Administration of the questionnaire was in a group setting; a blank envelope and an envelope collection box were provided for respondents to assure total anonymity. A total of 16 middle grade teachers completed the questionnaire.

As Table 3 shows, 94% of the teachers rated the current organization and programs at Ramey School as "weak" to "marginal" in addressing the social and emotional needs of the early adolescent. Sixty-two percent of these teachers rated the current educational organization and program as "weak" to "marginal" in addressing the needs of students in grades 6 through 8.

Table 3

Responses Regarding Current Program and Meeting Student Needs, April, 1990

| | Weak | Marginal | Adequate | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social/emotional needs met | 44% | 50% | 6% | 0% |
| Educational needs met | 25% | 37% | 31% | 6% |

N = 16

Possible Causes of Problem.

Adolescence is a critical period of biological and psychological changes for students. This age is characterized by exploratory behaviors. Many of these behaviors carry high risks in our society: tobacco, alcohol and drug use; sexual activity and disease; pregnancy; motor vehicle and other accidents; and school failure. Over 50% of the Ramey School middle grade teachers reported spending, on the average, less than 5 minutes per day with an individual student regarding concerns about social relationships, peer groups, health, and moral or ethical issues (see Table 4).

Table 4

Teacher Time Spent with Individual Students Dealing with Social, Personal, and Ethical Issues, April 1990

| Average Time Spent Per Day | % of Teachers |
|---|---|
| Less than 5 minutes per day | 56% |
| Five to 15 minutes per day | 43% |
| Fifteen to 25 minutes per day | 6% |
| More than 25 minutes per day | 0% |
| N = 16 | |

Often educators become aware of the problems of young adolescents only when a crisis occurs. A pregnant 13-year-old, alcoholic child, suicidal teenager, or delinquent youth

are merely manifestations of all youth caught in the middle (James, 1986). Vars (1989) stated that if there is ever any time in a person's life when guidance is needed, it is during the turbulent early adolescent years. In the best of these programs, young adolescents have an opportunity to get to know one adult really well and to learn about being a healthy individual (Beane & Lipka, 1987; Doda, 1981).

A review of Ramey School personnel records indicated that only one middle school teacher had a middle school certificate separate from an elementary or secondary endorsement. Most of the teachers at Ramey School were high school subject area teachers. According to interviews with teachers, none of the teachers of grades 6 through 8 completed in-service training coursework specifically dealing with the education of middle school youngsters. This situation is not unique to Ramey School. In 1989, Alexander and McEwin found in their study of 670 schools that only 13% of the middle level faculties had special preparation for teaching at this level. There are unique needs of middle level students that require specific teacher preparation. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) recommended staffing middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents and are specially prepared to teach middle grades.

An emphasis on student outcomes is especially important for middle grade programs of staff development. In-service that improves teacher efficiency, understanding, or actions

also must improve early adolescent students' school experiences and success (Epstein, Lockard, & Dauber, 1989). Transforming middle grade education, according to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), requires teachers who understand adolescents, can work as members of a team, are trained in the principles of guidance to serve as advisors, and have acquired strategies for varying delivery systems. Most Ramey School teachers hold secondary or elementary certification and have no coursework or in-service training preparing them for these requirements to teach middle school students. The manager considered this to be a major causal factor in the discrepancy between what existed and what was ideal.

A comparison of the recommendations from the research on effective middle grades education and the practices of the Ramey middle level teachers suggested a mismatch. Eighty-seven percent of the teachers responding in April 1990 to a questionnaire (see Appendix B) indicated teaming with other middle school teachers less than once a month. No teachers responded that they coordinate learning objectives with other teachers more than once a month; 44% answered that they never coordinate with other teachers. (see Table 5). In addition, 56% of the teachers reported using no articulation activities for transition between grade levels. The middle school teachers work in virtual isolation from one another. This isolation is a major factor in the discrepancy between what existed and what

constituted ideal practice in middle school.

Table 5

Teacher Responses Regarding Frequency of Team Efforts, April 1990

| Type of Teaming | Never | Monthly | Weekly | More Often |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Discuss students' needs and performance | 37% | 50% | 6% | 16% |
| Coordinate learning units | 44% | 56% | 0% | 0% |

N = 16

Schmidt (1982) reported that cooperative planning can be a major factor in making middle school truly responsive to the unique needs of the young adolescent. Harmon (1983) stated that the students ultimately gain the most from teacher team efforts. In New Jersey, the Cole Middle School staff determined an improvement in student discipline and achievement following 4 years of partial teaming and 2 more years of complete teaming (Schmidt & Kane, 1984). MacIver (1990) reported that most schools do not use interdisciplinary teams, including 60% of the middle schools. His findings also suggested that most teaching teams lack the common planning time they need. Teachers reported a dramatic reduction of classroom discipline problems through teaming (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989).

Based upon questionnaire responses, 45% of the Ramey middle grades teachers used cooperative learning groups less than once a month. Lyman and Foyle (1989) stated the following:

> Cooperative learning should be of particular interest to teachers of middle school children because, besides the highly desired outcomes described, cooperative learning enhances student motivation by providing peer support for students. It also encourages group processes and positive social and academic interaction among students, and rewards successful group participation. By encouraging positive student interaction and building group skills, teachers can positively increase the academic success and self-esteem of their students. (p.2)

A recent meta-analysis by Johnson and his associates in 1981, reported by Wood (1987), revealed that instruction that focused on cooperation and collaboration resulted in significant gains in achievement, self esteem, and social development Cooperative learning is an arrangement to supplement existing strategies that benefits all students in the middle grades (Beane & Lipka, 1987; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Madden, 1988).

A review by the manager of the student publications showed that there were no separate clubs, social events, or planned activities specifically designed for the students in grades 6 through 8. This could very well explain why students did not have a positive indicator on the student activities subscale of the student satisfaction survey. This subscale provided data regarding "student satisfaction with the number and types of school-sponsored activities and

with opportunities for student participation" (Halderson, 1987, p. 4).

As shown in Table 6, parent involvement at Ramey School declined progressively based upon children's grade level. By the middle grades, there was a significant weakening of the home-school connection, and sometimes it was nonexistent. A review of the Ramey School volunteer logs showed that most volunteer time was from nonparents and K through 2 parents.

Table 6

Ramey School Volunteer Hours by Category from August 1989 through May 1990

| | # Volunteers | # of Hours | Average Hrs |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nonparent volunteers | 6 | 675 | 112.5 |
| Parents of K-2 students | 27 | 726 | 26.8 |
| Parents of 3-5 students | 6 | 223 | 37.1 |
| Parents of 6-8 students | 6 | 319 | 53.1 |
| Parents of 9-12 students | 7 | 170 | 24.2 |

A recommendation of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) was to engage parents in the education of young adolescents to support the learning process at home and at school.

A clear mission statement helps members of any organized group select goals, set priorities, and evaluate progress. There was no mission statement for middle level

education at Ramey School. Without a common vision, it was possible for different teachers to work toward different goals. The manager found this to be an immediate concern in examining the causes of the problem.

# Chapter 3

## Influences in the Problem Context Bearing on Solutions and Outcomes

### Influences in the Immediate Problem Setting

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) recommends creating small communities of learning where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth. The size of Ramey School facilitated students forming teams and teachers working with these teams. This factor also allowed the program manager to work with fewer staff members and the faculty to teach fewer students. There were 16 faculty members who taught middle school youngsters and the student-to-teacher ratio was approximately 12 to 1.

The smallness of the school was also a constraining factor necessitating faculty members teaching students in more than one level. Most teachers of middle school students also taught secondary and/or elementary students; therefore, they could not concentrate their efforts only on the middle school student. The special area teachers had the responsibility for the total student body from kindergarten through grade 12. This factor constrained the schedule and reduced flexibility.

Another facilitating factor was that the Antilles Consolidated School System implemented the following

negotiated agreement with the Antilles Consolidated Education Association:

> The employer will grant renewal of a professional certificate only upon the employee's submission of the required application with the official documentation evidencing satisfactory completion of at least six (6) semester hours of credit from a regionally accredited college, university or ACSS training program during the preceding five (5) years. (Negotiated Agreement between ACEA and ACSS, p. 65)

This created an incentive for teachers to enroll in training programs that would prepare them for implementation of a middle school program. In addition, few local institutions of higher education provided for English speaking teachers to earn continuing education units, or receive university credit. In-service courses offered at the school would be well attended and received.

The school had local control of the budget, thus allowing for creative ways to arrange training and purchase materials aimed at correcting the problem. Working with the manager, the school budget committee planned all school expenditures. Volunteer faculty members, a parent representative, a student representative, and the principal were members of the committee. Training and materials aimed at middle level instruction could be supported by the local school budget.

Responses to the questionnaire (see Appendix B) administered in April, 1990 suggested that middle-grade

level teachers at Ramey School were willing to work together in teams. They were asked, "If you were provided with common planning time, which of the following activities would you find beneficial?" Those activities most often selected by the 16 respondents were (a) discussing how students are doing, (b) coordinating expectations for behavior, and (c) planning special project/activities for students (see Table 7).

Table 7

Common Planning Time Activities Teachers Indicated as Beneficial, April 1990

| Activities | # of Teachers |
|---|---|
| Discussing how students are doing | 15 |
| Coordinating expectations for behavior | 14 |
| Planning special projects/events for students | 13 |
| Diagnosing individual student needs | 12 |
| Integrating subject content | 11 |
| Sharing what works in your classroom | 11 |
| Planning special help for students | 11 |
| Conducting joint parent conferences | 7 |
| Coordinating test dates | 6 |
| Developing a shared grading plan | 6 |

N = 16

A formal structure was in place for faculty participation in instructional school decision-making. This

structure was the Ramey School Educational Leadership Team comprised of elected faculty members, a parent representative, an 11th or 12th-grade student, and the principal. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) strongly recommended empowering teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students through control of the instructional program. Prior to the implementation of a middle school at Ramey School, the manager sought the support of this committee.

Influences in the Broader Community External to the Problem Setting

In April of 1990, three Antilles Consolidated School System (ACSS) principals and the Director of Educational Programs attended a National Middle Level Conference presented by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. This provided a shared vision and demonstrated the school system's support of a middle school configuration and program at each site. The Director of Educational Programs scheduled meetings for the three middle school principals to share their school's program with all the school officers. This support contributed to the success of developing a Ramey Middle School.

Recent national attention focused on the education of the early adolescent was a facilitating factor. The publication of Turning Points by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) was the latest in this stream

of research. Several national organizations were available to serve as resources for middle school development. The manager contacted four of these organizations to request information, materials, and direction for in-service training. The support of national groups was a facilitating factor for this project.

Few social service agencies exist locally to deal with adolescent conflict. In addition, the vernacular of Puerto Rico is Spanish, and 40% of Ramey's families speak only English. This is a constraining factor over which the manager lacks control. It makes it imperative to deal effectively with affective education issues during the school day.

The children attending the school are dependents of military and civilian federal government employees who transfer to new locations every 3 years. This resulted in a one-third annual student turnover rate. This is a constraining factor that is not under the control of the manager. Students transferring to Ramey from large schools lack the experiential background to easily make the transition to a small school setting. It often takes these students a period of time to adjust.

The students live in diverse neighborhoods and are geographically and culturally separated from each other and the school. There are no organized ways in which the community and school work together to provide services and activities for the students. Except for those students

living on the secured military compound near the school, there is no clear sense of school community. Student activities that take place outside school are more difficult to arrange because of this separation and the need for parents to transport the students. In addition, there are sharp differences between the customs of the Hispanic culture and those of the military families. This is both a hindering and a facilitating factor. School activities provide the immediate community with an enhanced sense of belonging, pride, and positive interactions with students living in the Puerto Rican communities.

## Chapter 4

## Problem Conceptualization, Solution Strategy, and Project Outcomes

### Review of Literature and Consultations with Others

Perhaps the first question to be asked was, "Why create a school in the middle?" School districts throughout the nation created middle schools due to a requirement for more specialization in grades 5-6, to use the older building when a high school was built (Alexander & McEwin, 1988), or to relieve overcrowding (Sailor, 1986). The design of Middle schools was to remedy the "weakness" of the junior high school (Alexander & McEwin, 1989; Cawelti, 1988; Sailor, 1986).

In 1966, Donald Eichorn stated that today's youth interact differently with society and mature earlier than its counterpart did in 1900. His sociopsychological model advocated grades 6 through 8 middle schools. The Carnegie Task Force (1989) called on educators to meet the developmental needs of early adolescents. They indicated that it was necessary to create "middle level education" to provide early adolescents proper guidance and an appropriate education.

Alexander, in his 1968 study, considered schools having at least three grades and not more than five that included grades 6 and 7 as middle schools. Yet, in a replication

study he defined middle level schools as all schools between elementary and secondary school levels (Alexander & McEwin, 1989). The more recent term "middle level education" described all school formats separate from elementary and high schools that attempt to deal with the unique needs of 10-to 14-year-old youngsters (Bradley, 1988; Carnegie Councilon Adolescent Development, 1989).

In 1987, Philadelphia publicized its intention to convert junior high schools into middle schools. The following reasons were the basis for this decision: the district's already incongruent grade groupings; the number of student suspensions and grade retentions; and an analysis of pupils' poor academic performance (Pugh, 1988).

Our school district created schools based upon student population and building size with no regard to grade groupings. There was no clear philosophy or mission statement regarding middle level education. Recognizing the unique needs and providing a quality educational program for early adolescents had not been priorities at Ramey School.

A second important question to be asked was, "If a middle level school is to be organized, what is the best grade span configuration for this school?" At the middle level, there is a wider variation in grade configurations than at any other point in school. In 1968, William Alexander established criterion data relating to the identification and description of middle school organizations differing from the traditional 7-9 junior high

school pattern. He found that there was a definite trend toward grades 5-8 and 6-8 organizations. He reported the establishment of 90% of these schools in the 1960s, and the programs and practices of these newly created schools resembled their predecessors, the junior high schools (Alexander, 1968).

In agreement with Alexander's 1968 study, Johnston and Markle (1986) reported that they found no achievement differences in selected schools in Florida that could be attributed to grade level organization. They also cited Sardone's 1976 research of New Jersey middle and high schools, which revealed that middle school youngsters outscored junior high students on tests of basic skills, verbal and figurative creativity. In 1983, Calhoun (cited in Johnston & Markle, 1986) conducted an exhaustive search of the middle school literature. He indicated that there was little difference in academic achievement between middle schools and junior high schools. His findings also indicated that grade configuration had little effect on school climate. He concluded that the primary difference was in name only.

However, in conflict with Calhoun's findings, a 1985 research study by Pugh (1988), found differences between school organizations. Student suspensions were greater in grades 7 and 8 of the junior high schools. Also reported was that students in junior high schools were retained twice as often as those in middle and elementary schools.

Furthermore, the study documented that elementary and middle school students in grade 8 scored higher on the district's standardized tests than did eighth-grade students in junior high schools (Pugh, 1988).

In 1987, Moore reported that middle level students in self-contained classrooms have better student-teacher relationships, and departmentalized middle schools had an improved quality of instruction in specialized subject matter (McPartland, 1987). Still, middle schools with K through 8 enrollment patterns received the highest scores on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (Moore, 1987) when compared to other grade organizational patterns. Adding to this research data paradox, seventh graders in middle schools with a 6 through 8 pattern were found to be exposed to organizational structures and teaching practices more appropriate for higher order learning and social development than their counterparts in 7 through 9 schools (Braddock, Wu, & McPartland, 1988).

Additional data supporting findings by Calhoun were generated through a survey in 1986 by the New York State School Boards Association on educational trends in the middle grades. These data did not show consistent positive effects for any particular organizational plan (Sailor, 1986). A shadow study, where individual students were followed during their daily routine over a period of time, designed to compare differences in sixth grade programs in various grade configurations did not reflect significant

differences (Lounsbury & Johnston, 1988).

Another study by Braddock, Wu, and McPartland (1988) found that school grade span arrangements correlated with specific demographic characteristics of schools including location, school size, and school's community ethnic and socioeconomic composition. Typical schools with a grade 6 through 8 span were in suburban communities; typical junior highs were in the inner city; and the K through 8 or 7 through 12 schools were in rural areas.

In one of the most recent studies, Epstein and MacIver (1990) reported 30 different grade spans enrolling seventh-grade students. They found more of the recommended programs for responsive middle-grade education used in schools with 6 through 8 and 7 and 8 configurations. Cawelti (1988) also found the middle school organization of grades 6 through 8 most likely to provide program features advocated as most appropriate for students aged 10-14.

Comparing the 1968 data to 1988 replication survey data, Alexander and McEwin (1989) found that the middle school was moving toward becoming a full partner in the new three-level (elementary, middle, and high) system of education. Cawelti (1988) reported that middle schools for the most part were not just middle schools in name only, but were more likely to use recommended practices. No matter what the middle school organization, it is the types of practices that assure quality (Alexander & McEwin, 1989; Cawelti, 1988; Epstein, 1990a; Epstein & MacIver, 1990).

Although the introduction of the sixth through eighth grade middle schools sometimes accompanied fundamental changes in operating programs and learning environments for young adolescents, these changes were not typical practice (Braddock, Wu, & McPartland, 1988). Most schools that contained grade 7 had not developed educational programs based on recommended practices (Epstein & McIver, 1990) Lounsbury and Johnston (1988) concluded that the answer to the question, "Where does the sixth grade belong?" is not to be found in school configuration, but in the type of practices in place.

Following the theory of Lounsbury and Johnston that the type of practices in place is the answer to middle level education, the implementation of practices that support the educational and emotional growth of young adolescents cannot occur without teacher preparation. Tabulations from a national survey reported by McPartland (1987), showed middle-grade teachers certified primarily in specific subjects for secondary school instruction. A most important issue in the literature involves providing staff development for the faculty responsible for establishing a middle school program. Alexander and McEwin (1989) concluded that careful planning and teacher in-service training are requirements to begin a middle school. During a teleconference, Rosenzweig (1990) recommended in-service training for the staff and suggested collecting practical, useful materials from outstanding schools. Epstein, Lockard, and Dauber (1989)

reported that staff development for middle grades educators served several purposes, (a) increased awareness, (b) attitude change, (c) information transmission, (d) skill acquisition, (e) practicing behaviors, and (f) student improvement. These authors indicated that this list is a hierarchy of increasingly difficult purposes.

The success of staff development ultimately represents changes in attitudes, behaviors, and achievements of students. However, changes may first be seen by changes in teachers and administrators. During a teleconference with Epstein (1990b), she recommended staff development as an essential step to begin changes toward a middle school that employs effective practices.

There were key solution strategies recommended in the effective middle level education literature. Important benefits were associated with implementing the practices of a group advisory program, interdisciplinary teams with a team leader, and school transition programs. These improvement programs must have quality to have integrity (MacIver, 1990).

Spearheading the literature on exemplary middle level programs, Alexander and McEwin (1989) reported the following as earmarks of good middle schools: (a) an interdisciplinary organization, with a flexibly scheduled day; (b) an adequate guidance program, including a teacher advisory plan; (c) a full-scale exploratory program; (d) comprehensive curriculum provision for the broad goals of personal development; (e)

continued learning skills and basic knowledge; (f) varied and effective instructional methodology for the age group; and (g) continued orientation and articulation for students, parents, and teachers. Similar findings were reported by Brown (1981) whose recommendations for middle level schools include (a) team teaching, (b) common planning, (c) a variety of student groupings, (d) flexible scheduling, (e) an exploratory strand, (f) a focus on growth and development, (g) an advisor program, and (h) an affective education program. In addition, the results of a survey conducted by George and Oldaker (1986) indicated that successful middle schools organized teachers and students into interdisciplinary teams, rather than self-contained and departmentalized instructional units. These schools also used some kind of block scheduling, incorporated teacher advisor programs, focused curriculum on students' personal development and skills for continued learning, and involved teachers in participatory management.

Research findings of several investigators conclude that of these practices, teaming is the heart of a school in the middle. Teaming is not "team teaching." According to Doda (1981) teaming is an instructional organization in which two or more teachers pool their resources, interests, expertise, and knowledge of students, and jointly take the responsibility for meeting a significant part of the instructional needs of the same group of students. A cooperative teaching team can combine their judgments and

expertise in dealing with student evaluation, discipline, and learning. Recommendations based on research of early adolescence included an interdisciplinary team organization, with a flexibly scheduled day, and a common planning time for teams (Alexander & McEwin, 1989; Brown, 1981).

In sharing experiences and suggestions designed primarily for teachers, Doda (1981) described teaming as both a burden and a blessing. According to her, "teachers join hands in a common concern for youngsters, and it is in the resulting human community that special, even magical things can occur (p. 16)." Epstein (1990a) listed as a key practice for the middle grades: interdisciplinary teams of teachers and common planning time for teams. In a four phase development plan, Doda (1981) reported teaming to be extremely effective, and requiring special efforts on the part of the teachers involved. MacIver (1990) further reported that interdisciplinary teams with a team leader were more successful than teams without leaders. Teaming must include common planning time if it is to be successful (Epstein, 1990a; Doda, 1981; Schurr, 1988).

Concurring with MacIver, Epstein, and Doda about in-service training materials Schurr (1988) indicated the following as advantages of a team organization for students:

1. improved student/teacher relationships provided through sense of community and sense of belonging to an established team or school family with special identity/customs/rituals;

2. improved motivation and enthusiasm for learning provided through varied instructional materials,

techniques, and personalities;

3. improved attendance and behavior provided through consistent environment with common rules, guidelines, and procedures;

4. improved peer relationships provided through positive role modeling of teachers in cooperative learning groups and situations;

5. increased understanding of student needs through teacher sharing of instruction and evaluation of individual kids. (p. 25)

In support of Shurr, Bradley (1988) found in a selected middle school the interdisciplinary team organizational pattern was more effective in fostering math achievement than the departmentalized staff organizational pattern.

According to Shurr, there are also distinct advantages for the teachers in a team organization. The increased stimulation provided from working with colleagues enhances teacher morale. Teaching skills improve through modeling and observing the skills of colleagues. Sharing the responsibilities and the composite team output improves time management and provides a division of the labor (Schurr, 1988). Bradley (1988) found that the parents of students who participated in an interdisciplinary team organizational pattern held significantly more positive perceptions of the personal attention their child received.

Other than teaming, the development of advisor-advisee groups appeared most often in the literature as an essential practice for the effective middle school. Embedded in every school's philosophy are statements of purpose that call for attention to the whole child and all aspects of development.

Rarely are there specific programs to support the growth of social and emotional development. An increasing number of middle schools feature programs planned around these needs (James, 1986). According to Lounsbury, reported by George, (1987) the middle school has often been called the guidance school. There are obvious changes in physical growth accompanied by equally extensive changes in social, emotional, and intellectual development. For Americans living in a mobile and much-fractured society, Lounsbury stated a case for long-term teacher-student relationships providing a sense of association and community. According to George (1987), we cannot educate middle school students in the American factory model. Human beings are not best produced like the automobiles of the past with the division of labor and the assembly line prevailing. He advocated the establishment of the "promise of permanence (p. 2)" and long-term positive relationships for middle school students. Doda (1981) termed the advisor-advisee unit as a family at the school. It is within this family structure that she envisioned strong and nurturing relationships fostered. Schurr (1989) advocated regular experiences with the affective domain for the early adolescent. She stated:

> A long-standing debate over the realistic relationship between the cognitive and affective domain has plagued curriculum planners and developers for many years. Which comes first the chicken or the egg; the attitudes or the skills; the content or the discipline; are all points to ponder with no right answers. Whichever is the case, these views are inseparable when the transescent (early adolescent) is involved, and middle

> grade programs cannot ignore the fact that some meaningful relationship does exist. (p. 3?)

According to Beane and Lipka (1987), individuals who advocate affective education programs for middle school students understand the following statement:

> We want people to read, so we teach them directly to read; we want young people to write, so we teach them directly to write; we want young people to have positive mental health, but we expect that it will emanate out of some indirect part of the school program. To top things off, we are surprised when it doesn't. The fact is when you really want someone to learn something, you have to "teach" it to him/her. With regard to affective education in general and self concept/esteem in particular, this is just what advisory programs are meant to do. (p. 40)

According to James (1986), many middle schools have implemented very successful advisor-advisee programs in recent years. Based on the results of his detailed studies of six successful programs from around the country, several states and districts have pioneered the development of these programs that serve as models for other schools. Advisor advisee surfaces as a necessary practice in creating a true middle school.

More of the same does not work when teaching middle school youngsters. Successful teaching of early adolescent students must be based upon their needs. Their classroom activities should allow the students to play a more active role than is possible with traditional methods. This would involve more hands-on activities with the teacher acting as a coach or supervisor rather than a director (McPartland and Wu, 1988). Alexander and McEwin (1989) stressed continued

learning of skills and basic knowledge with varied and effective instructional methodology designed for the age group. Schurr (1988) stated:

> Not surprisingly (sic) students in the middle grades prefer active over passive learning situations, especially those that encourage interaction with their peers. Their tendency to be egocentric, to argue, to want to solve real life problems, and to exhibit independence all contribute to their intellectual growth when the wise teacher provides many opportunities for gaming and simulation, group discussions, discovery, experimentation, and field trips. The classroom at this level ought to be perceived by both teacher and student as a laboratory of life where units of instruction are not bound to a textbook, a lecture, or a teacher-dominated group activity. (p. 45)

Supporting improved instruction, Becker (1990) reviewed middle schools research and concluded that funding, organization, and staffing in most schools tend to militate against needed changes. The needed changes for the instruction of middle grade students were the following: provide significant exposure to a wider range of subjects; pay increased attention to cognitively demanding tasks; and provide a variety of modes of learning in which they can actively participate rather than being merely listeners, calculators, memorizers, and scribes. A monograph published by the National Association of Secondary Principals' Council on Middle Level Education (1989), postulated that experience may be the only teacher. It suggests that schools provide experiential enrichment for all students in the middle level school years. Rather than forcing adolescents to use higher

level thinking skills, ready or not, it advises us to help students become the best thinkers possible at the rate and pace of the individual. The monograph specifies recommendations toward this goal.

One of the recommendations toward this goal is that the use of cooperative learning as an instructional approach in the middle grades is a vital part of an effective program (Beane & Lipka, 1987; Doda, 1981; Epstein, 1990b; Lyman & Foyle, 1989). Lyman and Foyle (1989) advocated the use of cooperative learning groups in the middle school. They stated that cooperative learning enhanced student motivation by providing peer support. It also encouraged group processes and positive social and academic interaction among students and rewarded successful group participation. Wood (1987) reviewed the current research on cooperative learning and described several classroom grouping techniques. Her list of methods included detailed descriptions. By structuring tasks so that groups of students can complete them together, teachers can encourage academic success and foster supportive learning environments.

In addition to improving instruction, the scheduling of a middle school is a unique challenge. Lounsbury (1981) stated that a true middle school cannot operate on a departmentalized schedule. The middle school schedule does not have to be complex to be effective. It should reflect the needs of the students more than the preferences of the staff. Cawelti (1988) and Schurr (1989) endorsed block time

schedules to allow flexibility. Self-contained classroom instruction benefits student-teacher relations at a high cost to high quality subject-matter instruction, while departmentalization improves the quality of instruction in specialized subject matter at a cost to student-teacher relations. These trade-offs must be considered when scheduling and grouping students (McPartland, 1987).

Summarizing the issue of trade-offs, Pugh (1988) emphasized the importance of each school district to consider its unique features prior to converting to a middle school configuration. George (1981) indicated that critics have attacked the middle school movement as a cosmetic change. He countered that the reorganization of early adolescent education stands out as a humanistic innovation primarily supported by educators themselves.

In summary, this writer's review of the literature identified the most promising solution strategies advocated in the literature of exemplary middle schools as the following: (a) a team organization, (b) block scheduling, (c) advisor-advisee programs, (d) exploratory activities, (e) teachers trained in middle school education, (f) the use of hands-on instructional techniques, and (g) cooperative learning groups. The middle school movement is one of the most positive influences in the lives of young people that educators can offer (George, 1981).

Predicted MARP Terminal Outcomes

1. The National Association of Secondary Principals'

Student Satisfaction Survey will be administered in January 1992, and results will be compared with the May, 1990 baseline data. The manager predicted that students in grades 6 through 8 would obtain mean scores higher than 60 on the following survey subscales: schoolwork, student activities, and student discipline. Baseline mean scores for these areas were 46, 47 and 48 respectively.

2. It is expected that a review of students' discipline files will reveal students in grades 6 through 8 had no greater percentage of discipline referrals or suspensions than their counterparts in grades 4 5, and 9 through 12. These data will be collected for the period August 1990 through April 1991 to compare with the baseline data for the previous school year. These baseline data revealed that 52% of all discipline referrals were for students in grades 6 through 8.

3. The teacher questionnaire used to gather baseline data was to be re-administered in January 1992 to determine faculty perceptions and attitudes about the Ramey Middle School (see Appendix B). The manager predicted that 80% of the Ramey School middle grades' faculty would indicate that the program was adequately addressing the educational needs of the students in grades 6 through 8. Ninety percent of these teachers would indicate that the program was addressing the social and emotional needs of students in grades 6 through 8. Baseline data from the teacher survey administered in January 1990 showed only 37% of the teachers

responding that the program was adequately addressing the educational needs of the students and only 6% of the teachers indicating that it met the social and emotional needs of the students in grades 6 through 8.

Predicted MARP Process Outcomes

1. All the teachers of the middle grades will have at least one in-service training credit in middle level education and one-third credit in cooperative learning training. Based upon direct observation and teacher self report, the manager predicts that all the teachers of the middle grades will use cooperative learning groups in their classrooms.

2. A comparison of the Ramey School practices, programs, and organizational structure will reveal an association between existing practice and the following recommendations from the middle level education literature: (a) teacher and student teams, (b) an advisor-advisee program, and (c) cooperative learning used as an instructional strategy.

## Chapter 5

## Implementation History

### Original MARP Outcomes

One desired outcome for the implementation design of this major research project was to improve the student satisfaction indicators in grades 6 through 8 to standard scores of 60 or higher in the subscales of schoolwork, student activities, and student discipline by January of 1992. A second outcome was to reduce the number of discipline referrals and suspensions for middle school students to the same level as their counterparts in grades 4, 5, and 9 through 12 by April of 1991. The third outcome stated that the results of a teacher questionnaire to be administered in January 1992 would demonstrate that 90% of the teachers perceived the middle school program to be addressing the social and emotional needs of the students in grades 6 through 8. An additional process objective required training all middle school teachers in the use of cooperative learning strategies in their classrooms. The final objective for the action project at Ramey School was to evidence the following practices from the middle level education literature: (a) teacher and students teams, (b) an advisor-advisee program, and (c) cooperative learning used as an instructional strategy.

### Revised MARP Terminal and Process Objectives

During the first school year of implementation, 1990-1991, the manager altered the objectives to address students' identified needs and to measure results more completely. The first change was to collect the National Secondary Principals' Student Satisfaction Survey data in May 1991 and again in December 1991 and eliminate the January 1992 data collection. The manager based this decision on three factors: (a) the students at Ramey School have a long winter break and returning to school late in January might impact the results of a survey instrument administered immediately upon their return; (b) the manager's belief that survey results would improve as early as the end of the first implementation year; and (c) the desire to use data collected in May 1990 and May 1991 with the survey administration dates exactly one year apart.

In computing the scores for the data collected in May 1991, the manager discovered an error in the formula used to compute the original baseline data. This error, for the "Fellow Students" subscale, resulted in an unusually high score of 71. Using the correct formula the recomputed score was 52. This high standard score led the manager to incorrectly set the improvement goal for the three areas of improvement well above the national mean. Following correction of this score, the manager adjusted the first project goal to the following terminal outcome statement. The National Association of Secondary Principals' Student Satisfaction Survey will be administered in May 1991 and

December 1991, and results will be compared with baseline data; the manager predicted students in grades 6 through 8 would show "Student Satisfaction Survey" scores of 55 or above on the subscales of schoolwork, student activities, and student discipline, as compared to baseline standard scores of 46, 47, and 48 respectively.

The second terminal outcome was a measure of student discipline as determined by actual referrals and suspensions. The manager compared the data collected in April 1991 to the April 1990 baseline data. This outcome remained intact, as did the third terminal outcome relating to teacher perceptions regarding the middle school programs' success in addressing the social and emotional needs of the students in grades 6 through 8.

The fourth process objective involved teacher in service training and the use of cooperative learning groups in the classrooms. To allow for a better comparison of preintervention and postintervention data, the manager defined the term "use of cooperative learning groups in the classrooms" as: Based upon teacher self-report on the teacher survey used to gather baseline data, 80% of the teachers in grades 6 through 8 will report using cooperative learning groups at least once a week in their middle school classes.

The final original process objective statement lacked a measure of accountability. So, the manager modified this objective to include a comparison of the national percentile

rank on the complete battery of the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT-6). This became an additional terminal outcome. The manager predicted an average of a 5-percentile point increase for students in grades 6 through 8 from March 1990 until March 1991. The scores for the fifth, sixth, and seventh graders in 1990 would be compared with those for the same groups one year later in 1991.

Introduction

These five revised terminal and process objectives were to be accomplished through the implementation of several key practices advocated in the middle level education literature. These solution strategies helped the staff formulate the creation of a middle school at Ramey School. This "school-within-a-school" designed specifically to target the needs of the early adolescent, formally began in July 1990, following four months of preplanning.

The beginnings of this project followed a particularly poor semester in terms of student discipline at Ramey School. The manager met with the faculty in January 1990 to brainstorm ideas for correcting the problems. Simultaneously, the Director of Educational Programs for the school district suggested that the manager attend a middle school conference scheduled for April 1990 in New Orleans. This conference sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and attended by the three principals responsible for middle level students and the Director of Educational Programs, provided critical

direction in establishing priorities for implementing a middle school.

Preplanning and Scheduling

Prior to the establishment of a middle school, several preplanning events occurred. The first of these was the April 1990 Middle Level Conference sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in New Orleans. This conference shaped the manager's thinking about the need for a school in the middle. Upon return from the conference, the manager discussed with members of the school leadership team ideas from the conference, readings from current literature, and information from contacts with three national organizations regarding middle level education. Telephone interviews with the leaders in the field Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University, Susan Rosenzweig of the Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina, and Sandra Schurr of the National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education at the University of South Florida provided a wealth of additional ideas shared with the leadership team.

To validate perceived areas of need, other than the student discipline problems, the manager constructed and administered a questionnaire for collecting baseline data regarding teacher attitudes and perceptions concerning current middle level practices and selected and administered a student satisfaction survey to determine baseline data regarding student perceptions of their school. The manager

shared the resulting baseline data with prospective middle grade teachers to garner additional support for beginning a middle school program at Ramey School. After receiving this support, the manager informed the entire faculty on May 31, 1990 of the proposed changes in the organization of the school and solicited their endorsement and input.

After receiving input and endorsement from the Ramey School faculty, the manager solicited support from the Director of Educational Programs at the district level for establishing a middle level program and sought the Superintendent's approval for hiring a part-time counselor to work with a middle grade level advisor-advisee program. To add this position required deletion of one-half of a paraprofessional position. The school leadership team supported this choice in the allocation of resources.

During May 1990, the manager completed the master schedule for school year 1990-1991 to include block scheduling for grades 7 and 8, an exploratory program for grades 6 through 8, and one period a week for teacher teams to work together. These elements represented minimums for middle level programs based on the literature.

To ease the transition for the 1990-1991 school year, the seventh-grade teacher for Block 1 (homeroom, reading and English) met with the current sixth graders for an orientation session. The manager met with the Parent Teacher Organization's Executive Board to present the middle school concept. In preparation for summer training, the

manager secured a consultant for voluntary staff development of middle level teachers.

The manager completed the preplanning preparations for project implementation by joining the National Middle Schools Association and hiring a part-time middle school counselor to augment the current school counselor and serve in an advisor's capacity. Preparation of school publications for school year 1990-1991 reflected the reorganization of the school structure to include a middle school component.

Chronology of Implementation Activities

The action project for the implementation of the Ramey Middle School took place in two major phases that represented one and one-half school years. Phase one occurred during the 1990-1991 school year, and phase two began in August of 1991 and ended in December of 1991. Rearranging the schedule to establish learning blocks for grades 6 through 8 was the priority in the first phase. These extended time blocks provided additional flexibility. It also assured integrated objectives to be taught in reading, writing, spelling, and English. Science and math were also in one time block.

With block scheduling, students in grades 7 and 8 had fewer teachers and class changes during the school day than in the previous "traditional" departmentalized schedule. The typical student had four teachers instead of seven. There were two blocks of major academic time for students in

grades 7 and 8. This change replaced the period-by-period rotation of classes.

Students in grade 6, who were in self-contained classrooms prior to the implementation of the middle school concept, had two core teachers with an elementary science teacher assisting a core teacher for two one-hour science labs per week.

Besides the block scheduling, all students in grades 6 through 8 had three to four exploratory classes during the first year of implementation. In some of these, students in grades 6 through 8 were together. The elective exploratory program incorporated the following subjects: band, computer, Spanish, art, physical education, and industrial technology.

The second priority established common planning periods for core teacher teams. This time designed for teaming was in addition to the teachers' regularly scheduled preparation time. Each team had an assigned leader to record group decisions. The team leader had two additional periods per week to complete team leadership responsibilities. There were three core teams (one at each grade level) and one middle school team consisting of every faculty member working with middle level students. The entire middle school team could only meet after school hours because many members taught all grades and did not share common planning periods.

All middle school teachers cooperatively developed and used a common homework, discipline, and grading plan. The

students used the same headings, margins, and presentation style in each class. Teachers coordinated homework and test schedules. Classroom rules were the same in each class with a common warning system used by all middle level teachers. Teachers kept track of students on their team in all areas. Exams, tests, and assignments received credit in a uniform fashion. The coordination of these plans required teachers to discuss and compromise regarding the final product.

They also reached consensus regarding their mission statement. This provided direction for the program. During teacher team meetings, the core team discussed students experiencing difficulties to determine intervention strategies to help the student. Teams conducted joint teacher conferences with parents and met with individual students to develop assistance plans. Teams celebrated success and achievement.

The third priority involved student teams developing an identity and planning activities for themselves and the entire middle school. The three teams created team names, logos, shirts, and other appropriate symbols. The manager and teacher teams developed methods to recognize individual and team achievements.

An advisor-advisee program, following models from other school districts, became the fourth implementation priority. Trained counselors acted as student advisors. Eight advisory groups, formed with 6 to 12 students each, met with their advisor once a week for 45 minutes. The newly hired

information about the program and activities. The manager and teacher teams developed an organized incentive program for individual and team achievement during the first year of implementation. The individual incentive program included lunch off campus with the manager and awards presented at the end-of-the-year assembly. Teachers organized team recognition throughout the year.

The following list summarizes the priorities for the first phase of the project during school year 1990-1991: (a) block scheduling with exploratory classes, (b) weekly team meeting times for teachers, (c)student teams, (d) advisor-advisee program with the addition of a part-time counselor, (e) staff development, (f) social activities for students and an incentive program, and (g) addition of part-time middle school counselor.

During the second year of implementation, the original project plan called for teachers to use cooperative learning strategies with middle level students. Based upon observation by the manager, most teachers used cooperative learning instructional strategies in their classrooms during the first year of implementation. This was because of a very successful in-service training session held in January of 1991.

The second phase of the project occurred during the first semester of school year 1991-1992. The following list summarizes the additional priorities for this second phase:

1. Scheduling for team meetings without substitute coverage.
2. Expansion of teachers serving as advisors for the advisor-advisee program.
3. Lunch time intramural program.
4. Student council to meet quarterly.
5. Exploratory class teachers team to meet weekly with team leaders.
6. Assignment of a teacher leader for advisor-advisee.
7. Scheduling middle school lunch period to include 6 through 8 grades.

In-service Training Opportunities

Following the preplanning activities, implementation of the action plan began with in-service training for the faculty. This training was voluntary as it took place during the summer when some teachers were unavailable. Sixteen teachers and the manager received training July 9-10 from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the following areas: the nature of the adolescent, teaming, and advisor-advisee programs. Appendix C outlines the materials used in the training. The trainer, a consultant for the National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education, set the stage for successful implementation of a middle school program at Ramey School. This in-service training provided participants with one unit of credit toward district recertification. Appendix D provided a record of the training hours issued to each participant.

Modeling cooperative learning groups, the trainer reviewed the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual characteristics of the early adolescent and demonstrated why

the middle school can be the perfect transition from elementary to high school. The trainer also showed teachers the details and strategies required for teaming and explained how to set up an effective advisor-advisee program. Each attendee received a training manual and samples of materials used in other schools. The 15-hour training resulted in several group work-products that served as models for the entire middle school team upon their return to school in August. An evaluation summary completed by teachers (see Appendix E) after the training suggested the usefulness and excellent quality of the workshop.

The second training opportunity focused on cooperative learning. Three faculty members attended the cooperative learning training in Williamsburg, Virginia during the third week of August 1990. These individuals returned to the school and used the strategies in their classrooms. Because of their training, the recommendation surfaced that a more experienced trainer provide the bulk of the middle level teachers' cooperative learning training. The three teachers felt that the summer training prepared them to implement cooperative learning in their classrooms, but not to conduct a workshop for their peers.

On September 4, 1990, the middle level faculty reviewed written materials (see Appendix F) regarding the possible training offerings for the January in-service days. The workshop selected by the group was "Two, Three, or Four Heads Are Better Than One or Ways to Introduce Cooperative

Learning in Today's Middle School." This training took place during the January 1991 staff development days.

An additional training event to support the program involved the Assistant Principal. The manager felt that the Assistant Principal, as the administrator in charge of school discipline, needed to become current in middle school practice and the needs of the young adolescent. This seemed critical for an individual in this position to assist the teachers in discipline plans for middle school students. The Assistant Principal had been unable to attend the summer training for teachers. During November 14-17, 1990 the Assistant Principal attended the National Middle Schools Association National Conference in Long Beach, California. This conference enhanced skills in dealing with those middle school students referred to the Assistant Principal's office for disciplinary infractions.

Twenty-two middle level faculty and the manager attended the final training during the 1990-1991 school year held January 10-11, 1991 at Ramey School (see Appendix G). The consultant from The National Resource Center provided teachers with a variety of materials and methods for introducing students to both rewards and responsibilities of working with peers in cooperative learning settings to enhance academic and social skills (see Appendix H).

Prior to the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year, there was an advanced cooperative learning training for volunteers. Fifteen middle school teachers attended this 2

day training held August 9-10 at Ramey School. The Director of Educational Programs joined the teachers for this training session, as did several teachers of other grade levels. This 15-hour training, designed for individuals with prior cooperative learning training, extended the teachers' repertoire of strategies and gave them a forum in which to solve existing problems.

The second training opportunity for the 1991-1992 school year involved the Director of Educational Programs for the district. He met with the middle school teachers, at the manager's request, after school hours on September 13, 1991, to present material regarding integrated learning. He discussed the research and existing models with the group to answer four key questions: (a) what is integrated learning or interdisciplinary learning? (b) why should learning be integrated? (c) how can integrated learning be approached? and (d) how can integrated units be put together? Each middle school teacher received a prepared packet of summary materials. During team meetings held over the next two weeks, the Director of Educational Programs continued to follow up on the training by leading additional discussions regarding integrated learning. Two teachers of exploratory courses, Spanish and computer, approached him about a project to integrate computer instruction and Spanish. He met with them to develop a proposal aimed toward this goal.

The final staff development activity during the project

involved an in-service training topic selected by the entire Ramey School faculty for the two staff development days in January 1992. This topic reflected a theme of concern for the middle school teachers who wanted to increase their students' motivation to learn. The school's educational leadership team solicited feedback from the entire faculty regarding this selection of an in-service training theme. A consultant spent 2 days in January working with teachers on ways to increase student motivation. The consultant shared current research and practice regarding student motivation. Each teacher received a book, Managing to Teach, authored by the consultant, and materials relating to increasing student motivation and interest in learning. Based upon the in service training evaluation forms, the teachers rated the training as excellent

Teacher and Student Teaming

The second major development in the action plan came with the creation of teacher teams. The middle school became a reality in action, as teachers met in August of 1990 during the workdays and established teaming and planning schedules. They developed common homework, discipline, and grading plans for the middle school student teams. There were opportunities for compromise, as the group reached consensus regarding common expectations for students.

During the first days of the new school year, students contributed to their team identity to include team name,

colors, logo, and other spirit building identifiers. Teachers identified "the sea" as a common starting place for team name selections. The sixth-grade team selected "The Great White Sharks," the seventh-grade team "the Sting Rays," and the eighth-grade team "the Killer Whales." Parents received a copy of the team's homework and discipline plans with the signatures of the team teachers (see Appendix I). Parents and students signed these plans to acknowledge receipt and review.

The sixth-grade team was the first to complete their team shirts with a logo drawn and selected by the students. They proudly presented one to the manager and wore them each Friday for the rest of the school year. During the school year, they developed team note paper (see Appendix J), ordered team pencils, and posed for a group photo in front of a large statue of a shark at a nearby university. The middle school program enabled the sixth grade team members to join the newspaper staff and participate in clubs and activities; prior to this year, they were elementary students and did not participate in clubs or activities.

As the 1990-1991 school year progressed, all three teams adopted logos and their classrooms reflected their identity. The students voiced the desire to keep their team names throughout their school career. When the new sixth graders entered in 1991-1992, they eagerly selected their team identity as the "Tylosaurus", giant sea lizards, and designed shirts. Upon entering the sixth-grade class there

was a sign proclaiming, "You are entering Tylosaurus Country" and the Sting Rays declared "Sting Ray Power." Articles written by students appeared in the school newspaper regarding the team happenings and the middle school. Each Friday, the sixth-and-seventh grade teams proudly wore their shirts to school, and classrooms continued to boast messages relating to team identity. Yet, the eighth-grade students were often reluctant to wear team shirts and advertise team identity, except on special occasions such as field day.

Middle level teacher teams met weekly. During the first year of implementation, the meetings focused primarily on specific students with emotional, academic, or social problems and methods to support and help these students. The teachers worked on common intervention strategies and discussed teaching ideas. Whenever warranted, they met with a student to design an improvement contract or with parents to share in conferences. These meetings with other professionals allowed teachers to emphasize strengths and practice cooperative efforts with one another.

After the 1990-1991 school year of teaming, the teachers indicated the weakness in the teaming model to be the following: (a) another teacher having to cover their class when they met as a team, resulting in one day a week away from their students; (b) the exploratory teachers not having an opportunity to meet as a team during the school day; and (c) no interaction between the academic teachers

Tuesday to discuss their plans for RAP the following day. The manager selected a counselor to serve as the RAP advisors' team leader. This team leader provided the manager with monthly updates regarding the RAP topics and specific problems or concerns.

Advisor-Advisee Program (Ramey Affective Education Program)

Prior to the beginning of the 1990-1991 school year, the advisors completed advisee group assignments of 7 to 12 middle grade students. These groups met once a week for RAP. Materials presented by the in-service trainer in July 1990 formed student objectives for RAP. The advisors, both counselors, also met with the core teacher teams once a week to assist with their concerns about students.

The advisor-advisee component for each of the three grades focused on study habits, communication skills, problem-solving, decision-making, self-concept, and interpersonal relationships. The three general goals for RAP were: (a) to help middle school students develop their maximum physical, emotional, social, and academic potential; (b) to foster a positive school environment for students and staff; and (c) to enhance communication among students, peers, home, and school.

The major change in RAP for the second year of implementation, school year 1991-1992, involved including five selected teachers as RAP advisors with the two counselors. During the first year of the project, exploratory teachers indicated a dissatisfaction with

different students going to RAP on different days, resulting in never having their complete group of students in class. In addition, at the end of school year 1990-1991, the core academic teacher teams presented a proposal asking the manager to allow the counselor more time to work more directly with students. A resolution of these two concerns took place with the scheduling of RAP for Wednesdays. All students went to RAP on the same day, and the two counselors only had a RAP group on one day, freeing their schedules for counseling on the three other days. The RAP advisors met on Tuesdays for a teaming period to plan the Wednesday RAP for their groups.

The manager appointed a counselor to serve as the RAP team leader during the second year of the project. The counselor focused the team's attention, kept notes, and prepared materials. Each week, the RAP advisors met briefly to discuss RAP goals for the week. The team leader prepared applicable materials and led the discussion. Having a RAP team leader provided important structure and focus for the program. The leader furnished the manager with monthly written minutes from RAP advisors' meetings.

At the beginning of the school year, the counselors administered a survey to middle school students to find areas of common concern and interest to them. They tabulated the responses to decide common areas of concern for the middle school students at Raney School. Incorporating these themes appeared important to the

students. One RAP session in late November 1991 dealt with the students' concerns about not knowing how to dance to fifties music with the 1950s dance scheduled for the next week. The RAP advisors arranged for instruction and practice during the RAP class.

The RAP advisors worked with students they did not teach during the remainder of the school day. Each group contained 10 to 15 students of the same grade level. Topics during September through December 1991 focused on the following themes: (a) learning to control negative emotions; (b) AIDS education; (c) self-awareness, peer pressure, rules, and decision-making; (d) study and organizational skills; and (e) conflict resolution. The nurse joined the groups for the sessions dealing with AIDS education.

Besides RAP, another program dealing with affective education involved a select group of 10 youngsters experiencing difficulties in school adjustment. This class, Personal Development, met 5 days a week in an exploratory period. Class content centered on the themes of school and personal adjustment. The teacher, selected for his sensitivity and rapport with the students, provided a positive role model in the class. There was a requirement of parental permission for students to attend this class.

Grades 6-8 Teacher Meetings

Teachers met on August 28, 1990 with the manager to share initial reactions to the first week's teaming activities (see Appendix L). Positive comments were the

following: (a) the teams provide mutual support; (b) it is easier to spot kids in need of help when everyone works together; (c) there is more consistency from class to class; and (d) students know what to expect. The areas noted for improvement were the following: (a) the need to coordinate lessons and link curriculum, (b) suggestions for modifying the students' warning slip system, and (c) allowing the teams to keep their names throughout the remainder of their school years. Using the models of mission statements developed during the summer training, the team completed the Ramey School middle school mission statement (see Appendix M). During the meeting, RAP advisors discussed the advisor-advisee program, RAP. The RAP period required students to miss one exploratory period per week. The exploratory block teachers supported this requirement while voicing concern and dissatisfaction regarding different students leaving their classes daily.

A midyear meeting with the entire middle school faculty occurred on November 5, 1990. The social activity for December was the primary topic of discussion at this meeting. Another topic discussed was the students' reception of the middle school program. The eighth graders appeared to be the least receptive to team activities and the middle school program. The team brainstormed reasons for this and possible correctives. The team members, who had to leave their classes with a substitute once a week, stated that they hoped next year for a different way to have

teaming without leaving their classes with a substitute teacher.

On April 22, 1991, the manager met for the last time during the first year of implementation with the complete team of middle level teachers to discuss needed changes in the middle school program for the next school year also to celebrate the success of the first year's implementation (see Appendix N). The chief concerns identified by the teachers for correction during the 1991-1992 school year, the second phase of the action project, were the following: (a) having substitute teachers cover one class per week for four members of the core teacher team, (b) lack of an organized student group to coordinate student activities, (c) lack of communication between the sixth-grade teacher team and the other two teams, and (d) the sixth graders not having lunch during the same period as elementary students.

Following this meeting, the seven core teachers gave the manager a proposal to increase the middle school counseling and guidance services. In this proposal, they volunteered to assume responsibility for lunch and playground supervision to provide the resources needed for this extra time. Their willingness to assume these duties signified a commitment to the middle school counseling program (see Appendix O). Their request to increase the counselor's time with students for the 1991-1992 school year occurred without requiring them to assume supervision duties. The accommodation included five teachers advising a

RAP group, thus freeing the counselors to each spend three extra periods weekly counseling students.

Middle school teachers met during the August teacher workdays at the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year to discuss changes for the second implementation year and to agree formally upon the discipline and homework plan for the year (see Appendix P). During the first week of school, the student discipline, homework, and grading plans went home with students for parent and student signature. The manager appointed team leaders and published a schedule for team meetings. An additional topic of concern focused on accommodating the large number of students in the seventh-grade class. The manager added additional teaching staff periods to relieve overcrowding in this grade.

The middle school team held a second meeting during the 1991-1992 year of project implementation to reach consensus regarding an issue involving a shared after school detention period. The consensus of the group was that students would be assigned to this detention only after a student contract was in place and a parent conference occurred. Teachers planned together to rotate managing the detention and notifying parents.

Middle school teachers met again in January 10, 1992. They established their agenda and published summary minutes of their discussions (see Appendix Q). One issue discussed involved elective versus mandatory Spanish language exploratory classes. Other items of discussion included

having a separate parent night for middle school, holding parent conferences on a teacher workday, and revising eligibility rules.

The weekly team meetings held during the school day replaced the afterschool meetings previously required. Middle school faculty members requested afterschool faculty meetings only when a specific need arose. Teacher teams used afterschool time for meeting with parents, helping students, working with extracurricular clubs or sports, and lesson preparation.

Scheduling Changes for the Second Year of Implementation

The primary change for the 1991-1992 school year, the second year of project implementation, involved redesigning the master schedule to allow all middle school teachers a daily planning period and a daily teaming period without the need for substitute coverage in their classrooms. This major initiative also reduced the number of classes taught by each of these teachers. Instead of the previous six teaching periods per day, middle school teachers taught five student periods. This resulted in fewer students and fewer papers to grade; it provided more time to meet with peers, plan for classes, and engage in collaborative activities. When the manager circulated this schedule and requested feedback, it met with acceptance and positive reviews from the middle school teachers.

During the 1990-1991 school year the sixth grade students went to lunch at a different time than the

remainder of the middle school students. This precluded group activities and shared experiences. The manager scheduled all the middle school students for a common lunch period during the 1991-1992 school year. In addition, a lunch time intramural program provided supervised sports activities for the students. The physical education teacher opened the gym daily and supervised seasonal sports tournaments. The manager assigned additional paraprofessionals to monitor this lunch period because of the increased number of students.

The final schedule change involved the nonacademic, exploratory classes. Two additional exploratory periods, home economics and keyboarding, resulted from student and teacher input. In addition, all students in middle school could elect advanced band as an option during the second year of the project. During previous years, sixth-grade students had to miss most of their lunch period to join the advanced band class. During the second year of project implementation, students could choose from the following exploratory classes: beginning band, advanced band, Spanish, keyboarding, home economics, computer, industrial technology, and physical education.

Middle School Student Activities

The first middle school student activity held on August 31, 1990 was a middle school Pop-Up Party with all the core teachers, the nurse, advisors, and the manager meeting with the students. The manager outlined incentives for team and

individual achievement (see Appendix R). Students from each team would be selected each month by the teacher teams for "lunch out" with the principal. The criteria for these selections were: (a) the most improved student; and (b) the student best exemplifying an individual who is intellectually curious, works hard, maintains good health, cares about others, and is a good citizen. The core teachers, advisors, and Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) prepared refreshments for the students following this discussion.

After the first month, the teacher teams selected students for the Principal's Incentive Lunch Program. The teachers conferred with the manager and decided to assume responsibility for the team awards themselves. On October 2, 1990, the manager took the first students to Pizza Hut for lunch. Following the lunch, a letter mailed to the parents of the student congratulated students for their selection (see Appendix S). At the end of the year these students received a certificate at the awards assembly. During the school year, 23 students went to lunch with the manager, received a congratulatory letter, and earned recognition at the end of the school year. The faculty and manager felt this was an important part of the program to be continued during the next school year.

To celebrate the first semester of the Ramey Middle School, the teacher teams held a "Christmas Activity" for the students. Because 65% of the student body is Hispanic,

the celebration featured traditional Puerto Rican foods and entertainment to honor those students and share the local customs with non-island students. A local folkloric group provided entertainment. The group joined the students for lunch. Following the lunch, students played music and danced before returning to class.

Another opportunity for the middle school students to share experiences with the local community was an exchange program with a local school, Liceo Aguadillano. One-half of the students visited this school, while the other one-half remained on campus to serve as hosts. Each student participated as visitor and host during the two day exchange.

During the 1990-1991 school year, there were six social activities for middle school students. After each event, the school provided transportation. The eighth-grade team was host to the first middle school social activity, a pool party, and a cook-out from 2:30-6:30 in the afternoon. Their invitations indicated that the "Killer Whales" challenged the "Sting Rays" and the "Great White Sharks" to get into the water. The seventh-grade team invited the middle school students to a beach party, and the eighth grade team held an evening skating party for the group. In honor of student appreciation day, the Parent Teacher Student Association treated the middle school students to an afternoon pool party.

Another activity on May 9, 1991, sponsored by the

physical education teachers was a middle school Field Day exclusively for middle school students. The three teams wore their shirts and challenged one another to contests and fun activities. Each student participated with their teachers. A pool party finished this day. Prior to the 1990-1991 school year, middle school students joined either elementary or high school field activities.

The final middle level activity for the 1990-1991 school year included an awards ceremony to celebrate student successes and the eighth-grade promotion ceremony. The students planned the promotion ceremony on May 30, 1991 to celebrate the end of middle school and the beginning of high school. The ceremony took place in the evening so that parents could attend. A reception followed this event.

During meetings with teachers and students during the first year, the manager discussed the need for a middle school student council to meet quarterly. Students would gain experience in leadership and decision-making through this organization. The manager agreed to assume the primary role in sponsoring this activity for the first year 1991-1992. In addition, at the final meeting of the school leadership team, the teacher representatives, a parent representative, a high school student, and the manager, decided to include a middle school student on the team for the 1991- 1992 school year.

At the beginning of school year 1991-1992, the manager met with the middle school students and teachers to outline

the Principal's Incentive Lunch Program and plans for a student council organization. The first student council meeting held during the first quarter gave the students of middle school the opportunity to plan the first semester's two social events.

The first of these social events was a Pizza Party held at a lighthouse picnic area. The students enjoyed games of softball, water balloon toss, tag, and time for socializing together. This activity took place immediately after school and the school provided transportation home for students. Middle school faculty members and middle school parents served as chaperones.

The second social, a fifties dance, took place in the school cafeteria. The school music teacher acted as disc jockey, and the students decorated the room and planned their refreshments. On the evening of the dance, poodle skirts, jeans jackets, slicked back hair, and pony tails appeared on middle school students as they danced and "limboed" through the evening. At 10 o'clock in the evening, the bus left to take students home, and the manager heard one young student remark, "I hope we can do this again next week."

Seventh-grade students planned the third social, a school day pool party for January. They petitioned the manager for approval. This activity included a "brownie bake-off" and began at mid-morning. Students ate lunch, swam, played games, and socialized. They returned to school

to take their regular busses home.

District Level Implications on the Restructuring of the Middle Grades

A spin-off from the manager's project, was the interaction with two other schools in the district with grade levels in the middle. A meeting on August 30, 1990 with the Director of Educational Programs, the manager, and the two other middle school principals focused on the status of the three schools' programs and plans. The other two schools had a grades 5 through 8 configuration, but no middle school practices were in place at either site. Neither of the principals planned to implement middle school practices during the 1990-1991 school year, but wanted to move in that direction. The manager shared information and sample materials with them.

During the second year of the Major Applied Research Project, one of the other schools in the district began implementation of a similar project. The principal of the other school shared enthusiastic results with the manager. The principal of the third school in the district plans to implement middle school practices during school year 1992-1993.

The district level changes that had the most impact on the project was the Superintendent's resignation in October 1990 and the hiring of a new individual from outside the district in January 1991. The manager's proposal had the support of the outgoing Superintendent.

It was important to enlist support from the new Superintendent. The manager briefed the new Superintendent on February 21, 1991 regarding the middle school project. She was receptive to the implementation of a middle school at Ramey School. She announced, at a meeting of the school principals in March 1991, support for creating middle schools in the district and her plan to support staffing requests to enhance the middle school programs at the three campuses.

Another of the new Superintendent's first actions was to eliminate four central office positions, including the Director of Educational Programs, an observer for the manager's applied research project. The Director of Educational Programs served as the chief advocate for the middle school programs and provided support for the manager during the preplanning and first year of project implementation. Initially, the elimination of this position appeared to have a negative impact on the development of the middle school project at Ramey School and within the district. However, in May 1991, the Superintendent met with the manager and discussed the possibility of having the Director of Educational Programs work in a resource capacity at the school level on middle school improvement and curriculum projects. She indicated that this offer would extend to all three schools. The manager believed one reason for this interest by the Director of Educational Programs and the Superintendent was the emerging middle

school applied research project at Ramey School.

The manager discussed this proposal with the Director of Educational Programs on May 29, 1991 during his visit to the school. He indicated an interest in working with the Ramey middle level faculty to implement the second phase of the action project, specifically developing interdisciplinary learning units for each grade level. At the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year, the Director of Educational Programs began working an average of 2 days of each week at Ramey School, but he did not officially assume his new position because the newly hired Superintendent resigned in September 1991. Her resignation came as a shock to everyone in the district.

This resignation left the Director of Educational Program's position with the middle school unsettled. As the Director, he continued to work at Ramey School until November when the Acting Superintendent, a principal in the district, requested him to report to a new site and end his work with the middle school. During the 3 months of his collaborative work with the Ramey Middle School teachers, his major accomplishments were the following: (a) a collaborative teaching project with the middle school science teacher, (b) providing materials on staff development opportunities and presenting an in-service session to the middle school staff regarding integrated learning units, (c) feedback to the manager regarding the Major Applied Research Project and its implementation, and

(d) feedback and direction for two teachers working on a proposal for integrating computer and Spanish instruction. The decision to transfer the Director of Educational Programs was not within the manager's sphere of influence, but the manager believed that a continuation of his work at Ramey School would have resulted in the development of more integrated learning units by teacher teams.

Reporting to Parents on the Ramey Middle School

Each middle school teacher presented the middle school program to parents at Open House on September 21, 1990. Parents appreciated the program developed for their children. Several parents of seventh and eighth graders commented that the social activities would be welcomed after the previous years when middle school students attended high school dances. To inform parents not attending the Open House of the middle school program, the manager published an article in the parent newsletter. During the year, the classes reported on their social activities and the manager congratulated the Principal's Incentive Lunch Program recipients in the newsletter.

Another link to parents occurred when the teacher teams met with students' parents to develop cooperative solutions to problems. Parents signed the team's homework and discipline plan and remained informed of social activities through permission slips and notices. The field day and awards activities included parent invitations, and many parents attended these events.

Articles regarding middle school activities regularly appeared in school publications. In each edition of the school newspaper, the student teams published news about their activities. During school registration, all school publications given to parents reflected the middle school mission and activities at Ramey School.

Other Factors Influencing the Project's Implementation

On October 7, 1991, the unexpected death of a key staff member greatly affected the total school community. This individual had worked as the secretary to the Ramey School Principal for 23 years. The manager served as the principal for the last 3 of those years. The staff and student body mourned her loss, and social activities seemed temporarily out-of-place. Student and staff counseling needs centered on grief and loss. In some ways, shared tragedy brought team members closer.

The second factor affecting the school climate and the middle school project during the first year of implementation was the Gulf War. As a school servicing military dependents, many parents served in the war zone. This condition shifted priorities, and several Ramey Affective Education Program (RAP) sessions dealt with the anxiety generated by the war. In addition, as a possible target for terrorist activity, security requirements for access to the school changed. Parents hesitated in allowing students to travel away from the school and military compound area. New students came to the school in the

middle of the school year when their parents went to the Gulf. Their stay depended upon the war continuing. Because it is a school servicing military dependents, the war altered Ramey's day-to-day operation.

The third unexpected series of events during the 1990-1991 school year was the resignation of the Superintendent, 3 months with an acting Superintendent, and the hiring of a new Superintendent from outside the district. This change in leadership altered the district's management. The new Superintendent immediately decentralized the district and moved to a school-based decision-making model. Though this change did not adversely impact Ramey School, it created stress and anxiety. The next event in this series coincided with the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year when the newly hired Superintendent unexpectedly resigned. She agreed in August 1991 to serve as an observer for the manager's Major Applied Research Project and resigned in September 1991. Following so closely the drastic changes in the district, this occurrence further raised the level of anxiety within the school. A high school principal in the district became Acting Superintendent, and Ramey School became even more autonomous. At the time of this final report, the selection of a new Superintendent is complete, and he arrives in April 1992. The concerns regarding the changes that might be made by a newly appointed individual remain.

The final factor influencing the Major Applied Research

Project during the second year of implementation was the team visit of the North Central Accreditation Association. This accreditation visit occurred 5 years after the last team visit. The self-study completed in preparation for the team visit included an entire section on the middle school program at Ramey School. This self-study provided a further opportunity to examine current practices in light of desired outcomes. Yet, the preparations required for such a visit took enormous energy and time. The focus of school personnel from the end of November through the end of January was the North Central Accreditation team visit. As of this final report, the written report of the team has not arrived at the school.

Summary of Support for Action Components of the Ramey School Middle School Program

The success of the Major Applied Research Project's action components resulted from several factors. The teachers at Ramey School were supportive and eager to work with the manager for change. They accepted teaming and cooperation as the standard. In fact, the teachers exceeded the manager's expectations by adopting the project as theirs. This meant that the project's direction shifted, based upon their input and interest. This participatory action provided a positive climate for change and shared decision-making among participants and the manager.

Second, the manager received support from the district level administration at critical points in the project.

Both superintendents supported the project. Though there were periods of a complete vacuum in district level leadership, the Director of Educational Programs, serving as an observer, acted as a stable advocate until November of 1992 when he received reassignment. The Major Applied Research Project was near completion, with all resources and programs firmly in place, when he left his position.

Third, the resources allocated by the school budget committee and the commitment by the school leadership team were essential to the project's success. In-service training opportunities, materials, allocation of staff, and other fiscal requirements received support from the total Ramey School staff. There were times when other grade level teachers indicated feeling left out of the project, yet they remained supportive advocates.

Finally, the middle grade level educators on a national level provided guidance, consultation, and models for this project. Their expertise and willingness to assist the manager with the project were invaluable. The consultants selected to provide staff development also provided tremendous support.

## Chapter 6

## Evaluation of Results and Process

### Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Major Applied Research Project

One of the terminal objectives of this Major Applied Research Project was to reduce the number of discipline referrals and suspensions for middle school students at Ramey School to the same level as their counterparts in grades 4, 5, and 9 through 12. The evaluation data presented on the following pages indicated that all middle level grades reflected improvement from April 1990 to April 1991.

Further, the research project was to increase student satisfaction with schoolwork, student activities, and student discipline, as measured by standard scores on the subscales of the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Student Satisfaction Survey. Evaluation data reflected improvement in these three dimensions of student satisfaction, and the manager's projected improvements were reflected in scores on the subscale of student activities. Other subscales not targeted by the manager for improvement also reflected growth.

The third terminal outcome of the Major Applied Research Project related to teachers' perceptions relating to the success of the middle school program at Ramey School.

The postintervention evaluation data showed changes in teachers' perceptions when compared to data collected prior to the project implementation. The survey used to collect data also reflected other significant improvements in teachers' self-reported perceptions and practices regarding middle level education.

The final evaluation activity of the Major Applied Research Project was to compare achievement test scores from the Metropolitan Achievement Tests given one year after project implementation with scores from tests administered prior to project implementation. These comparisons reflected an increase in the achievement for middle school students at Ramey School.

A process objective involved the use of cooperative learning groups in middle school classrooms at Ramey School. Based upon the data reported by teachers and presented in this report, teachers increased their use of cooperative learning strategies with students.

The first evaluation activity related to the first terminal objective. This evaluation included a comparison of discipline referral and suspension data for middle grade students after one year of project implementation in April 1991 with April 1990 referral and suspension data. The manager analyzed all discipline referral and suspension data maintained for all students to make comparisons.

The second activity was a comparison of standard scores on three separate administrations of the National

Association of Secondary School Principals' Student Satisfaction Survey. The survey was first administered in May 1990 prior to the implementation of the project, again in May 1991 following one year of project implementation, and finally in December 1991 after the first semester of the second implementation year.

The third evaluation activity involved analysis of teacher perception data obtained from a survey administered in March 1990, prior to project implementation, and administered again in December 1991, following one and one-half years of project implementation. The manager compared responses from these two administrations.

The final evaluation activity involved a comparison of achievement test scores for students in grades 6 through 8 in March 1990, prior to project implementation, with scores obtained in March 1991, after one year of project implementation. Tests administered were different forms (L and M) of the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT-6).

Review of Student Discipline Referrals and Suspensions and Middle Level Results:

In April 1991, the manager reviewed all the discipline files for the preceding year. A comparison of data collected in 1991 with 1990 baseline data revealed marked improvement. The most dramatic improvement was shown by the eighth graders who had 26% of all discipline referrals in grades 4 through 12 for school year 1989-1990 compared to only 11% in 1990-1991. The eighth graders in 1989-1990

accounted for 38% of all suspensions compared to 11% in 1990-1991. All middle level grades reflected improvement in the number of referrals and suspensions (see Table 8).

Table 8

A Comparison of Discipline Referrals and Suspensions for School Year 1989-1990 and School Year 1990-1991

| Grade | # Referrals | | % Referrals | | # Suspen. | | % Suspen. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 89-90 | 90-91 | 89-90 | 90-91 | 89-90 | 90-91 | 89-90 | 90-91 |
| 4 | 21 | 14 | 9% | 6% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0% |
| 5 | 14 | 43 | 6% | 18% | 1 | 7 | 2% | 13% |
| 6 | 24 | 12 | 11% | 5% | 5 | 2 | 11% | 4% |
| 7 | 34 | 25 | 15% | 10% | 6 | 6 | 14% | 11% |
| 8 | 58 | 27 | 26% | 11% | 16 | 6 | 38% | 11% |
| 9 | 24 | 76 | 11% | 31% | 5 | 23 | 11% | 43% |
| 10 | 21 | 28 | 9% | 12% | 4 | 6 | 9% | 11% |
| 11 | 17 | 15 | 8% | 6% | 1 | 3 | 8% | 6% |
| 12 | 11 | 2 | 5% | 1% | 4 | 0 | 9% | 0% |

The current ninth graders, last year's eighth graders, had the most referrals and suspensions for both years. This was the group that triggered the investigation into more appropriate practices for middle level students.

Student Satisfaction Survey Administration and Results

At the end of the 1991 school year, the manager administered the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Student Satisfaction Survey to students in the

middle school. Table 9, which shows a comparison of May 1991 results with May 1990 baseline data, revealed that the subscales targeted for improvement showed improved standard scores: schoolwork improved from 46 to 53, student activities improved from 47 to 55, student discipline improved from 48 to 54, and student decision-making opportunities improved from 48 to 54. These results suggested partial success toward the manager's modified terminal outcome.

Table 9

A Comparison of Student Satisfaction Survey Data for Grades 6-8 for School Year 1989-1990 and School Year 1990-1991

| | School Year 1989-90 Results | | | School Year 1990-91 Results | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subscale | Mean | S.D. | Stand. Score | Mean | S.D. | Stan. Score |
| Teachers | 24 | 4.3 | 50 | 25 | 5.3 | 52 |
| Fellow students | 18 | 3.6 | 52 | 18 | 3.6 | 52 |
| Schoolwork | 17 | 4.0 | 46 | 20 | 4.3 | 53 |
| Student activities | 17 | 4.9 | 47 | 20 | 4.8 | 55 |
| Student discipline | 19 | 3.8 | 48 | 22 | 3.5 | 54 |
| Decision-making Opportunities | 14 | 4.6 | 48 | 17 | 4.0 | 54 |
| Sch. bldg.,upkeep & supplies | 24 | 4.9 | 55 | 24 | 4.6 | 55 |
| Communication | 20 N = 97 | 4.6 | 51 | 22 N = 86 | 5.1 | 53 |

Again in December of 1991, the manager administered the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Student

Satisfaction Survey to students in grades 6 through 8 at Ramey School. The only areas to improve from May to December of 1991 were decision-making opportunities, from a standard score of 54 to 55, and communication, from 53 to 54, two areas which were not targeted. No targeted area improved further, and one area, student discipline, reflected a decrease from 54 to 52. Yet, the total increases, when comparing the preintervention survey administration data with the December 1991 postintervention data, reflected growth (see Table 10).

Table 10

A Comparison of Student Satisfaction Survey Data for Grades 6-8 from May 1990, May 1991, and December 1991

| | May 1990 | May 1991 | Dec 1991 |
|---|---|---|---|
| SUBSCALE | Standard Score | Standard Score | Standard Score |
| Teachers | 50 | 52 | 52 |
| Fellow students | 52 | 52 | 52 |
| Schoolwork | 46 | 53 | 53 |
| Student activities | 47 | 55 | 55 |
| Student discipline | 48 | 54 | 52 |
| Decision-making Opportunities | 48 | 54 | 55 |
| Sch. bldg.,upkeep & supplies | 55 | 55 | 55 |
| Communication | 51 | 53 | 54 |
| | N = 97 | N = 86 | N = 90 |

Although the standardized scores failed to reach the manager's projections 55 or above on the subscales of schoolwork, students activities, and student discipline, they reflected general improvement from the preintervention subscale scores. The manager also noted that subscales that were not target areas also improved. All subscales demonstrated growth from the preintervention baseline. Based upon the comparisons of preintervention and postintervention data, the middle school students demonstrated an improvement in their perceived school satisfaction responses.

Teacher Perception Survey Administration and Results

In December, following the first semester of the 1991-1992 school year, the manager administered the teacher questionnaire for comparison of data with that collected in January 1990. Teachers of grades 6 through 8 completed this questionnaire to determine current practices and perceptions regarding the middle level students and their educational program (see Appendix B). A total of 18 middle grade teachers completed the questionnaire.

Ninety-three percent of the teachers rated the current organization and programs at Ramey School as "adequate" to "excellent" in meeting the educational needs of students in grades 6 through 8. Seventy-six percent rated the current program and organization at Ramey School as "adequate" to "excellent" in addressing the social and emotional needs of the early adolescents. As shown in Table 11, these

responses contrast sharply with responses given in January 1990.

Table 11

Comparison of Teacher Responses in January 1990 and in December 1991 Regarding Current Program and Meeting Student Needs

| Response | Educational Needs Met | | Soc/emotional Needs Met | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1990 | 1991 | 1990 | 1991 |
| Weak | 25% | 0% | 44% | 0% |
| Marginal | 37% | 11% | 50% | 17% |
| Adequate | 31% | 76% | 6% | 70% |
| Excellent | 6% | 17% | 0% | 6% |
| | N=16 | N=18 | | |

The manager's outcome statements indicated that 80% of the Ramey School middle level faculty would indicate that the program adequately addresses the educational needs of the students in grades 6 through 8. In actuality, 93% responded that the educational program was adequate to excellent in meeting the educational needs of the students. This represented 13% above the targeted percent goal.

The observed percent did not meet the manager's prediction that 90% of the middle grades faculty would respond that the current program adequately meets the social and emotional needs of the students. Though the

postintervention data represents an improvement of 70% over the preintervention data, the 76% falls 14% short of the predicted outcome.

Other survey responses revealed growth and improvement during the one and one-half years of implementation. Thirty-five percent of the Ramey School middle grade teachers reported spending, on the average, less than 5 minutes per day with an individual student regarding concerns about social relationships, peer groups, health, and moral or ethical issues. This is in contrast to January of 1990. Forty-one percent reported spending more than 20 minutes per day compared to zero who spent this much time in 1990 (see Table 12).

Ninety-eight percent of the teachers responding to the postintervention questionnaire indicated teaming with other middle school teachers once a week or more. As shown in Table 13, this compared with 22% of the teachers on the preintervention questionnaire.

Table 12

A Comparison of 1990 and 1991 Teacher Time Spent with Individual Students Dealing with Social, Personal, and Ethical Issues

| Average Daily Time Spent | % of Teachers January 1990 | % of Teachers December 1991 |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 5 minutes | 50% | 35% |
| Five to 15 minutes | 43% | 24% |
| Fifteen to 25 minutes | 6% | 6% |
| More than 25 minutes | 0% | 41% |
| | N = 16 | N= 18 |

Table 13

A Comparison of 1990 and 1991 Teacher Responses Regarding Frequency of Teaming to Discuss Students' Needs/Performance

| Frequency | January 1990 | December 1991 |
|---|---|---|
| Never | 37% | 2% |
| Less than once a monthly | 50% | 2% |
| Once a week | 6% | 48% |
| More than once weekly | 16% | 48% |
| | N = 16 | N = 18 |

Prior to project implementation, the Ramey School middle school teachers worked in virtual isolation from one another. This isolation was a major factor in the discrepancy between what existed at Ramey School and what constitutes ideal practice in middle school.

Teachers report teaming activities at Ramey School to be largely successful. Teachers were especially positive about time provided in their schedules to meet with one another. One teacher stated to the manager:

> When we got together to work as teams we combined our judgments and expertise in dealing with student discipline and learning. For most of the students this approach worked well. I didn't feel like I was the only one with a problem, and I didn't have to come up with the solution in isolation. I think teaming also divided the labor and saved us time.

Meeting minutes and feedback from middle school teachers reflected that the seventh-and-eighth grade teacher teams work together often, while the sixth-grade team remained

separate from the other two teams. This surfaced as an area of concern to be dealt with during the 1992-1993 school year.

In addition, the teams did not begin a major coordination of learning units. Prior to the implementation of the Major Applied Research Project, 44% of the teachers reported never having had an opportunity to coordinate learning units or objectives for middle grade students with other teachers. Fifty-six percent reported engaging in this type of coordination less than once a month. Data collected from the postintervention questionnaire showed modest growth in this area. Thirty-five percent of the teachers reported never having had the opportunity to coordinate learning units, and 41% indicated doing so less than once a month. The growth was due to the 24% who responded that they coordinated learning units once a week or more than once a week (see Table 14).

Table 14

Comparison of 1990 and 1991 Teacher Responses Regarding Coordinating Learning Units with Other Teachers

| Frequency | January 1990 | December 1991 |
|---|---|---|
| Never | 44% | 35% |
| Less than once monthly | 56% | 41% |
| Once a week | 0% | 23% |
| More than once weekly | 0% | 1% |
| | N = 16 | N = 18 |

Teachers coordinating learning units remains an area of future focus for the Ramey Middle School.

Teachers Self-Reported Use of Cooperative Learning Groups in Middle School Classrooms

Based upon teacher self-report on a questionnaire administered in December of 1991, 70% of the teachers used cooperative learning groups at least once a week in their middle school classes. The manager's goal stated that 80% of the teachers would report using cooperative groups at least once a week. These results fell 10% short of the prediction. Thirty percent of the teachers indicated using cooperative groups less than once a month. This figure was an improvement on the January 1990 percent of 45% using cooperative groups less than once a month (see Table 15).

Table 15

Comparison of 1990 and 1991 Teacher Responses Regarding the Use of Structured Cooperative Learning Groups

| Frequency | January 1990 | December 1991 |
|---|---|---|
| Never | 37% | 17% |
| Less than once monthly | 50% | 17% |
| Once a week | 6% | 29% |
| More than once a week | 16% | 41% |
| | N=16 | N=18 |

During the formal observations in the middle school classrooms from October to December 1991, the manager noted that all but one middle school teacher used a grouped

seating arrangement. Only one teacher's classroom placed students' desks in linear rows. This contrasted sharply with the observations made prior to the projects' implementation. At that time, there was no evidence of cooperative learning being used as an instructional strategy and all classrooms were in linear rows with the students' desks facing the teacher.

Achievement Test Administration and Middle Level Results

Analysis of the evaluation data indicated that during the first year of the research project, students' scores in grades 6 through 8 for the full battery of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests increased when compared to the previous school year. Analyses compared the sixth graders' scores to their fifth grade scores, the seventh graders' scores to their sixth grade scores, and the eighth graders' scores to their seventh grade scores. Each comparison revealed improvement. Table 16 compares the preintervention and postintervention average percentile ranks.

The manager and faculty attributed the percentile rank increases to several factors: (a) close monitoring of students by the teacher teams, (b) block scheduling that provided students and teachers with fewer daily changes and resulting personalities, and (c) increased use of cooperative learning strategies within the classrooms. This increase in achievement test scores represented an average increase of 10 percentile points for the three grades. This exceeded the manager's projection of a 5 percentile point

average increase.

Table 16

Comparisons of MAT-6 Total Battery Achievement Test Results for March 1990 and March 1991

| Grade | March 1990 Median Percentile Rank | March 1991 Median Percentile Rank | Median Percentile Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 55 | 71 | 16 |
| 7 | 69 | 78 | 9 |
| 8 | 63 | 67 | 4 |
| | N = 90 | N = 87 | |

In a spin-off of the achievement test measures, the manager noted an unusually high score in the March 1991 test results for the seventh graders in "total language." These students achieved a national percentile rank of 93 compared with a national percentile rank of 74 the year before. The teacher for this block primarily used cooperative learning strategies when teaching language arts classes with these students. The seating arrangement for students in this class was in groups of three or four. Lessons centered on students collaborating to succeed. Additionally, the manager noted that the teacher maintained high expectations for the youngsters in his class.

Additional Analysis of Project Components

Because of implementing a middle school program from

July 1990 until January 1992, teachers of middle grade students participated in weekly team meetings. Team leaders' minutes and the manager's visits to scheduled meetings on a random basis documented this component. The team leaders met with the special area teachers on Wednesdays while the students attended the advisor-advisee session. A schedule of team meetings provided the required structure.

Formation of an advisor-advisee program was another major component of the Ramey Middle School applied research project. This weekly class provided a focus on affective education. A curriculum purchased from another school district provided the basic structure for the advisors. In addition, topics selected from the students' responses to a questionnaire and teacher input helped guide the course content.

The Ramey School advisor-advisee program (RAP) proved to be a successful part of the total middle school project implementation. These long-term teacher-student relationships provided a sense of community and association for the students. It is the manager's belief that the students' increased Satisfaction Survey scores for the communications subscale resulted largely from the RAP program. From the first day of the second school year of project implementation, one student continually approached the manager asking:

> When do we start RAP again? That's the main reason I want to be in school. Who will my RAP advisor be? Are you sure we get to have RAP again? You know that RAP is the best part of school, don't you?

The manager believed this highly verbal student reflected the views of most other returning middle school students. In addition, the school nurse joined the RAP advisors to talk with students about current topics of concern to adolescents. As an example, when a well known sports hero contracted AIDS, the nurse and RAP advisors talked with the students about the implications.

Reflections on the Solution Strategy

This Major Applied Research Project originally centered upon student discipline. The focus primarily surfaced through student behavior that resulted in numerous discipline referrals and suspensions. In addition, middle level students did not appear to fit well in the elementary school configuration or the high school configuration. The Student Satisfaction Survey indicated the areas of schoolwork, student discipline, and student activities as especially low. These grades seemed "caught in the middle". The methods used to collect preintervention and postintervention information regarding student discipline and student satisfaction proved adequate. They presented the type of information that could be easily compared.

As the project began to unfold, it became clear to the manager that there needed to be more focus on the cognitive development of the middle school student. The methods used

to collect these data were only partly successful. The increased achievement test scores lacked a "cause and effect" relationship. A greater emphasis on measuring student learning would have strengthened the overall project.

In addition, the only instructional strategy targeted for improvement was the use of cooperative learning. Information on cooperative learning was obtained from teacher self-report and the manager's observations regarding classroom desk arrangement. This aspect of the action plan and data-gathering needed more specific indicators to document teacher use of cooperative learning in the classroom. Also additional instructional strategies could have been emphasized. The MARP provided no systematic effort to improve classroom instruction to better suit the needs of the middle school student.

The project lacked momentum during the last 2 months of implementation. It is the manager's belief that there were two contributing factors for this lack of energy. The first was the removal of the Director of Educational Programs from his work with the Ramey School middle school teachers. His removal came when significant work on integrated learning units could have taken place. He had given one teacher-training session regarding integrated learning, and he mentored two teachers as they worked on an interdisciplinary unit. Another reason for the lack of momentum during the last 2 months was the North Central Association Team visit

preparations. The team visit occurs every 5 years and requires an extensive self-study and report preparation. The final work took place during the last 2 months of the MARP.

Side Effects of the Major Applied Research Project

The side effects of the research project proved to be important. The increased attention to the role of the counselor in middle level education suggested a change in teacher attitudes. A letter sent to the manager by the teachers volunteering to assume lunch supervision duties to free more time for counseling with students signaled teacher commitment. Adding a part-time counselor and conducting the personal development class directed resources to proactive measures toward student behavior, not to disciplinary action following the behavior.

Another side-effect resulted from the middle school teacher teams' collaborative work affecting school-wide leadership. Many issues directed to the educational leadership team resulted from the input of the middle school teams. These issues, when placed on the agenda and acted upon, shaped the educational programs for the entire school community. The middle school teacher teams collaborated weekly and generated several proposals that became school wide commitments. There was replication of several successful middle school initiatives by other grade levels. One example of this was an affective education program in grades 4 and 5. This program resulted from the success of

RAP with the middle level students.

## Chapter 7

## Decisions on Future Interventions

The implemented components of this Major Applied Research Project will remain an integral part of the Ramey Middle School program. It was clear, based upon student and faculty surveys, that prior to the project's implementation teachers and students wanted changes in the organization and structure for grades 6 through 8. The implementation of effective middle school practices led to improvements in these perceptions, to a reduction of student discipline referrals and suspensions, and to an increase in student standardized achievement test scores. The manager feels that the success of this applied research project will ensure maintaining a middle school and lead to an ongoing improvement plan for grades 6 through 8 in the future.

The present middle school program and organization will continue to receive minor adjustments by the teachers and manager because of experience and input. The project improved through the efforts of the teachers and ownership transferred to those responsible for the work--the teachers. The faculty of the middle grades often proceeded much more quickly than the project plan required. The manager believed this to be one important indicator of the project's success.

In order to maintain the middle school program, the manager will continue to monitor student satisfaction indicators. Additionally, student achievement test scores and discipline referral and suspension data for middle level students will be monitored on a yearly basis.

Major Modifications to the Middle School

At the time of this final report, there are two areas for future interventions that the manager would suggest. The first concerns the area of student motivation and achievement. There is a hierarchy required for improving middle level education. Ultimate success is in changes in the attitudes, behaviors, and achievements of students. However, changes may first appear as changes in teachers and administrators. This can be discouraging for teachers who want student results, particularly concerning student motivation, much sooner. Epstein, Lockard, and Dauber (1989) reported that student achievement is the last in a hierarchy of increasingly difficult purposes. The manager sees this area as one of concern to the teachers. As one teacher stated, "If the middle school practices at Ramey School are more appropriate for the students, why are the students not more motivated to learn and become serious scholars?"

Perhaps the key to student motivation and learning is through varied instructional materials, techniques, and personalities. The use of hands-on instructional techniques and varied, effective instructional methodology are not

fully implemented at Ramey School. More of the same teaching does not work with early adolescents. Their classroom activities should provide for the teacher acting as a coach or supervisor, not a director.

The second area for future interventions would be the use of integrated or interdisciplinary learning units. Based upon the research involving both middle level learning and interdisciplinary teaching, this will be a future direction for the Ramey Middle School.

There is one logistical modification needed in the schedule. The seventh-and eighth-grade teacher teams worked together often, while the sixth-grade team remained separate from the other two teams. This surfaced as an area of concern to be dealt with in the schedule for the 1992-1993 school year.

Dissemination of Information about Benefits

As a small unit school, it would have been easy not to create a "school-within-a-school" for middle level students. The manager believes the Ramey model demonstrates that any school can implement a program incorporating best middle level practices. The Ramey Middle School teachers taught other grade levels, and the school design was of a traditional unit school. Yet, the teachers made the necessary changes to implement middle school practices at Ramey School.

The manager feels that this applied project could be easily adapted to other school districts. Other school

principals, as potential project managers, should first seek the support of the teachers within the school, the school district, and the superintendent. Having control of resources needed for implementation would be another vital element for successful project implementation. There are tremendous national resources available for middle school support. As the manager of a project designed to implement a middle school, it would be important to consult with these national organizations.

It is the manager's hope that the Ramey School model will continue to serve as a catalyst for the other two schools within the district. The schools in the local Puerto Rican communities do not currently employ middle school practices. Their configuration is that of a traditional junior high. Unfortunately, these schools do not have the financial support required to implement change. The manager will act as a resource for other schools, particularly those small unit schools, in developing a "school-within-a-school" for students in grades 6 through 8. At Ramey School it has been successful, and this success could be replicated.

Recommendations

The manager's first recommendation would be that middle schools have a staff trained in working with early adolescents and committed to that age group. Educators who work with early adolescents must accept the challenge of meeting the special needs of this age group. This

recommendation also surfaces in the middle school literature, and often involves teacher training and certification. At Ramey School only one teacher was specifically certified as a middle level educator. The other teachers held either secondary subject-matter certification or elementary certification. Staff development, literature readings, and awareness sessions can help prepare teachers to work with early adolescents, but special training leading to certification remains the best practice.

The second recommendation is that middle schools continue a strong program of basic skills, recognizing that the change from concrete to abstract reasoning is a natural part of development that generally takes place during this time. Instructional strategies should be varied, designed for active learning, and include opportunities for students to work in cooperative learning groups.

The third recommendation is for a strong guidance program with an advisor-advisee component. In a good school for middle level students, the staff unabashedly cares for the students and shows always a sincere interest in student concerns. The counseling program should be developmental in nature and not merely reactive to crisis situations.

The fourth recommendation for middle schools is to provide opportunities for students to engage in social and physical activities. A wide range of extracurricular and exploratory activities with emphasis on participation are

suggested.

The manager's final recommendation for schools implementing middle school programs is to review the current literature and research. High priority should be given to research regarding successful teaching techniques for middle grade students. Visiting other effective middle schools and sharing ideas with colleagues are also important.

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# Appendices

Appendix A

# STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

FORM A

Neal Schmitt and Brian Loher

***Directions***

This survey has a number of statements which may describe situations in your school. For each statement, mark one answer, on the answer sheet. Use only a No. 2 pencil. Do not write on this questionnaire.

Do *not* mark in this booklet or write your name on the answer sheet (your answers are confidential). Use the scale below to select the answer that best describes how you feel about each item:

1 = I am *very unhappy* about this aspect of my school.
2 = I am *unhappy* about this aspect of my school.
3 = I am *neither happy nor unhappy* about this aspect of my school.
4 = I am *happy* about this aspect of my school.
5 = I am *very happy* about this aspect of my school.
6 = I *don't know* how I feel about this aspect of my school, or I *don't know* whether this statement fits my school.

Appendix B

From: Elaine B. Hinman

To: Professional staff working with middle grade students (grades 6 through 8)

I am seeking information about current practices at Ramey School in the middle grades (6-8). This information will be used to formulate a school improvement plan focusing on the middle grades.

Please complete this questionnaire, place it in the blank envelope, and drop it in the collection box as you leave. I appreciate your assistance.

Your position:(check one)
_____ subject area teacher
_____ special area teacher
_____ student services

1. On the average, how much time per day do you spend dealing with individual middle grade students' concerns about social relationships, peer groups, health, and moral or ethical issues?

____ less than 5 minutes per day
____ 5 to 15 minutes per day
____ 15 to 25 minutes per day
____ more than 20 minutes per day

2. How many activities did you utilize this school year to insure that sixth and eighth graders made a smooth transition to the next grade level?

____ none
____ 1 or 2
____ 3 or 4
____ more than 4

3. While teaching the middle grades during this school year, how often have you used structured cooperative learning groups?

____ never
____ less than once a month
____ once a week
____ more than once a week

4. How often during this school year have you met with other professional staff members specifically to discuss middle grade students' needs and learn how they are performing in another subject?

____ never
____ less than once a month
____ once a week
____ more than once a week

5. How often during this school year have you had the opportunity to coordinate your learning units/objectives for middle grade students with another teacher to implement an interdisciplinary approach?

____ never
____ less than once a month
____ once a week
____ more than once a week

6. In what area is your teaching certification/s?

____ secondary, subject matter certification
____ elementary certification
____ middle grades certification (separate from elementary\secondary)
____ other
(describe)_____

7. What other experiences in education have you had in the past? (Mark all that apply.)

____ high school subject-area teacher
____ middle grades teacher
____ elementary grades teacher
____ guidance counselor at any level
____ school administrator at any level

8. To what extent do you think the organization and program at Ramey School is currently addressing the <u>educational</u> needs of students in grades 6-8.

____ weak - needs major changes to meet students' needs
____ marginal - needs minor changes to meet students' needs
____ adequate - meets most students' needs
____ excellent - practices fit students' needs exactly

9. To what extent do you think the organization and program at Ramey School is currently addressing the **social and emotional** needs of students in grades 6-8.

____ **weak** - needs major changes to meet students' needs
____ **marginal** - needs minor changes to meet students' needs
____ **adequate** - meets most students' needs
____ **excellent** - practices fit students' needs exactly

10. Of the following attributes of a 7th grade teacher, which THREE do you believe are MOST important.

____ command of the subject area
____ ability to increase student motivation
____ ability to prepare the students for high school
____ ability to teach students study skills
____ understanding of early adolescent development

11. If you had to select from the goals listed below, how would you rank their importance for ALL Ramey students in the middle grades.(Rank order from "6" for the most important goal to "1".)

____ basic skills in reading, math, science, social studies, & English
____ higher level thinking skills
____ citizenship (service to school and community)
____ work habits (self-discipline)
____ personal growth and development
____ human relations

12. Estimate the percentage of time that you used any of the following teaching strategies with middle grade students this year. (Your total should equal 100%.)

____ lecture/direct instruction/students may take notes
____ question and answer
____ simulations/experiments/labs
____ cooperative learning
____ students read and answer questions
____ plays, debates, panels, and student presentations
____ computer-assisted instruction
____ students complete independent seatwork
____ inquiry teaching
____ other _____

13. If you were to be provided common planning time with other teachers of middle grade students, which of the following activities would you find beneficial? (Place an X by those you would find beneficial.)

____ integrating subject content
____ diagnosing individual student needs
____ planning special projects and events for students
____ conducting joint parent conferences
____ discussing how students are doing
____ planning special help for students
____ coordinating test dates
____ coordinating expectations for behavior
____ developing a shared grading plan
____ sharing what works in your classroom
____ other _____

14. If any, what suggestions would you make for restructuring the organization and program of the middle grades at Ramey School?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Appendix C

**MIDDLE SCHOOL TRAINING**

**RAMEY SCHOOL**

# WHY A SCHOOL IN THE MIDDLE?

# TEAMING; THE HEART OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

# EVERYBODY GETS AN "A" IN AFFECTIVE EDUCATION

**JULY 9-10, 1990**

**PRESENTED BY**

**Kathy LaMorte, consultant from**
**the University of South Florida**

**Middle Childhood Staff Development Center**

**ALL RAMEY SCHOOL MIDDLE GRADES TEACHERS**

**ARE INVITED TO ATTEND**

**RAMEY SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER**

## Appendix D

## Training Roster

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
ANTILLES CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SYSTEM
BOX 3200
FPO MIAMI, FLORIDA 34051

Ser 011
8 September 1990

From: Management Analysis Officer
To: Consolidated Civilian Personnel Office, Division 121
Subj: TRAINING COMPLETION OF ANTILLES CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SYSTEM PERSONNEL

1. The following ACSS School employees have completed the indicated number of hours for "Teaching the Middle Grade Student" training on July 9 and 10 , 1990 at Ramey School:

Diane Hernandez
Garred Giles
Abraham Aponte
Richard Roettger
Joseph Motolenich
Sila Bosques
Harry Hamilton
Katherine Karl
Linda Lopez
Lydia Baan
Jaime Otero
Nelida Rivera
Carmen Fonseca
Joseph Villanueva
Elaine Hinman
Alba Sadler
Linda Schaffer

2.Please record the indicated training on the official ACSS In-service Education Training forms maintained in their personnel files.

3. These employees have been sent certificates of training.

SUSAN WINSLOW BRADY

Copy to:
Trainees

Appendix E

## EVALUATION SUMMARY

Middle Grades Training

July 9-10 Kathy LaMorte, Instructor

The feedback sheet will provide the presenter and ACSS with important information about the usefulness of this workshop to you and the extent to which the presenter was able to model skills associated with student achievement. Please circle the response number to each item below that most closely represents your judgment.

4 = ALWAYS 3 = USUALLY 2 = SOMETIMES 1 = NEVER 0 = NOT APPLICABLE

---

1. PLANNING STANDARDS

Was the presenter evidently well prepared with regard to materials and equipment?

4=15 3=1 2=0 1=0 0=0

2. STUDENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Did the presenter communicate tasks clearly and effectively so that most could comply?

4=15 3=1 2=0 1=1 0=0

3. TIME/MATERIAL MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Did the presenter make transitions between activities without disruption, confusion or loss of time?

4=13 3=3 2=0 1=0 0=0

Did the presenter complete the presentation within the allotted time?

4=14 3=2 2=0 1=0 0=0

4. INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION STANDARDS

Did the presenter state or make explicit the learning objective(s)?

4=12 3=4 2=0 1=0 0=0

Did the presenter, during the presentation, check understanding?

4=10 3=6 2=0 1=0 0=0

Did the presenter, during the presentation, affirm or correct responses?

4=8 3=7 2=1 1=0 0=0

5. INSTRUCTION ACTIVITY STANDARDS

Did the presenter assess mastery of the objective(s)?

4=10 3=5 2=1 1=0 0=0

Did the presenter summarize what was presented?

4=10 3=5 2=1 1=0 0=0

Did the presenter provide guided and independent practice?

4=11 3=4 2=0 1=0 0=2

Appendix F
Workshop Selection

ANTILLES CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SYSTEM
RAMEY SCHOOL

From: Principal

To: Middle School Faculty

Subj: WORKSHOP OFFERING

Date: 4 SEPT 1990

1. At our meeting on August 28, the group decided to invite a consultant from the National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education to offer training in January. Attached is a listing of possible choices. Please select by number your first three choices. Give them to Rick Roettger..

# WORKSHOP OFFERINGS

SELECT THREE IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE

1. RENEWAL OF LEARNING CENTERS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS
2. DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR DIFFERENT KIDS
3. INVESTIGATION
4. THE FUTURE IS NEWS TO ME
5. TNT: DYNAMITE IN THE CLASSROOM
6. TWO, THREE, OR FOUR HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE
7. TRICKS TO MOTIVATING THE RELUCTANT LEARNER
8. EDUCATING STUDENTS OF TODAY FOR THE WORLD OF TOMORROW
9. DETERMINING ONE'S IDU TO ENHANCE ONE'S IQ QUOTIENT
10. HOW GOOD ARE YOU AT FINE TUNING YOUR PARENT POWER
11. THE ABC's OF HIGH CONTENT, HIGH SUPPORT, AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS
12. TAKE THE PAPER AND PENCIL OUT OF ADVISOR/ADVISEE
13. EMPOWERING STUDENTS THROUGH BETTER CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
14. THE ANATOMY OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL

See attached materials for a complete description of each workshop.

Appendix G

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
ANTILLES CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SYSTEM
BOX 3200
FPO MIAMI, FLORIDA 34051

12410
Ser 011
24 January 1991

From: Director of Human Resources
To: Consolidated Civilian Personnel Office, Division 121
Subj: TRAINING COMPLETION OF ANTILLES CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SYSTEM

1. The following ACSS School employees have complete "Cooperative Learning in the Middle School" training presented by Sharon Lewis on January 10-11, 1991 at Ramey School:

Marjorie Adams
Garred Giles
Abraham Aponte
Richard Roettger
Joseph Motolenich
Sila Bosques
Harry Hamilton
Katherine Karl
Susan Conklin
Lydia Baan
Jaime Otero
Nelida Rivera
Mary Otero
Joseph Villanueva
Elaine Hinman
Sarah Ginn
Linda Schaffer
Linda Taffi
Guadalupe Sumners
Shirley Riley
Steven Hundley

2. Please record attendance on official ACSS In-service Education Training forms amintained in their personnel files.

3. These emplyees have been sent certificates of training.

SUSAN WINSLOW BRADY

Copy to:
Trainees

Appendix H

RAMEY SCHOOL MIDDLE SCHOOL TRAINING

# TWO, THREE, OR FOUR HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO COOPERATIVE LEARNING

**JANUARY 10-11, 1991**

PRESENTED BY:

THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR MIDDLE GRADES EDUCATION

University of South Florida

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER for MIDDLE GRADES EDUCATION

## Appendix I

## Letter to Parents

To: Parents of Middles School Students
"The Great White Sharks" Team - Grade 6

From: Teachers of 6th-Grade Team
Ramey School

Subject: Homework and Discipline Plans

### RAMEY MIDDLE SCHOOL HOMEWORK POLICY

Academic success is dependent upon several points. Students are expected to be prepared and in class on time daily. Notes will be taken in every class to some extent. We use a variety of teaching methods and styles. and we present information in many different ways: lectures, chalk board, discussion, reading, visual demonstrations, cooperative learning activities, simulations, and hands-on experiences.

In order to meet our educational objectives for each student, it is often necessary to assign homework. For one teacher, homework will be to study for a test, still for another, it will be to complete an exercise or problem, answer questions, read a selection, or write a paper. Each teacher will be clear and concise in assigning homework. If the student is paying attention, he/she will know exactly what is expected when. It is the responsibility of the student to keep a written record of each assignment. Homework will be assigned in all academic classes 2 to 4 days a week. Homework assignments are generally not given on Fridays. Our team takes homework very seriously, and we are more than fair with our assignments.

**THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THE FOLLOWING IS SHARED WITH OUR STUDENTS FROM THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL AND DISCUSSED REGULARLY**

The following requirements and/or procedures are common to all teachers on this team:

Late homework is accepted only due to a student's excused absence. Excused absences are for the following reasons:

- death in the immediate family
- illness, medical, or dental examination or treatment
- worthwhile activities approved (in writing) in advance by the principal

**NO CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN FOR UNEXCUSED LATE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS**

Students who are absent are expected to make up all work that has been missed. Much is taught daily in every class, and attendance is very important. It is the student's responsibility to request work that was missed and to set up a time for make-up tests. Time limits are important. Seven days is the **maximum** time allowed to complete missed work. NOTE: Students who were present when a test date was announced, but are absent on the test day, will be expected to sit for a make-up on the day of return.

3. Please remember that absences negatively affect grades. Students who frequently miss school generally receive lower grades than those who attend regularly. Classroom teacher/student contact literally cannot be made up. Interaction in the classroom is a crucial ingredient in the learning process.

4. Extraneous drawing and/or writing on papers that will be turned in is distracting and is not permitted. Loose leaf paper should not be ripped from composition notebooks. Students will be required to use a standard heading on all papers and assignments. This heading will be placed in the top right hand corner and consist of complete name, class name/subject, date, and assignment title.

RAMEY MIDDLE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PLAN

We believe the following:

- All students can learn.
- All students can behave appropriately
- Standards of expectations should be set high and clearly defined.
- Standards of discipline are firm, fair, and consistent.
- Teachers can be successful and be role models for their students.
- Performance standards for the entire Ramey staff are high.
- Our commitment to students and the school program is unconditional.

We expect all students and parents/guardians to read the Student Handbook; we expect students to abide by the rules and regulations stated there. These handbooks were distributed to each family at registration.

It is at this point that we as "The Great White Sharks Team" would expect certain behaviors in our classrooms. These "observable" behaviors are listed below:

- Students must be in their seats ready to begin class when the bell rings
- Students must come to class prepared with the proper materials. A list will be provided.
- Students must show courtesy to classmates and staff.
- Students are expected to stay "on task."
- Students are not permitted to eat in the classroom or

chew gum while at school.
- Students must follow directions.

***NO STUDENT SHOULD KEEP A TEACHER FROM TEACHING OR ANOTHER STUDENT FROM LEARNING***

If the above behaviors are not followed daily in each class the team will utilize this plan:

*1st consequence*: a written warning slip (to be taken to each class)

*2nd consequence*: a second warning on the student's slip; possible teacher-assigned detention

*3rd consequence*: a team conference is scheduled with the student and team staff to develop a contract regarding behavior (student signs and a copy is mailed home to parent/guardian)

*4th consequence*: contact parents; student may be isolated in some manner

*5th consequence*: parent conference

*6th consequence*: referral to the office with all documentation from previous steps.

**SEVERE CLAUSE**; Most behaviors that are classified as Group II, III, IV, V in the Student Code will be referred directly to the administration for appropriate consequences.

More important, we feel, are positive consequences which students receive for following the "observable" behaviors. Pcsitive consequences might include: a day of no homework, a letter or call home, special treats, and/or game period or special activity.

Thank you in advance for your attention to our plan. Please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter to your child's first period teacher as soon as possible. Retain this letter as a reference for you and your child.

Marge Adams Marge Adams

Katherine Carl Katherine Carl

Betty Miller Elizabeth Miller

Linda Schaffer Linda Schaffer

Sila Bosques Sila Bosques

Lydia Baan Lydia Baan

Harry Hamilton Harry E Hamilton II

Lilly Rivera Nilda Rivera

Sarah Ginn' Sarah Mc Ginn

Jaime Otero Jaime A. Otero



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix J

# The Great White Sharks
## Sixth Grade

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Appendix K

### TEAM MEETING SCHEDULE

### MIDDLE SCHOOL RAP

RAP ADVISORS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Joseph Villanueva** | Carmen Fonseca | Katherine Carl |
| Garred Giles | Abraham Aponte | James Conklin |
| Joseph Motolenich | | |

RAP ADVISORS MEET TUESDAY — STUENTS' RAP WEDNESDAY

---

### SPECIALS TEACHER TEAM

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Jamie Otero | Harry Hamilton | Guadalupe Sumners |
| Sila Bosques | Lydia Bain | **Majorie Adams** |
| Betty Miller | **Richard Roettger** | Karen Wilson |
| **Linda Taffi** | | |

MEETING WEDNESDAY

---

### 6TH GRADE CORE TEAM

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Majorie Adams** | Linda Schaffer | Joseph Villanueva |
| Katherine Carl | | |

MEETING MONDAY

---

### 7TH GRADE CORE TEAM

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Joseph Motolenich | **Richard Roettger** | Garred Giles |
| Carmen Fonseca | Joseph Villanueva | |

MEETING THURSDAY

---

### 8TH GRADE CORE TEAM

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Richard Roettger** | **Linda Taffi** | Abraham Aponte |
| Carmen Fonseca | | |

MEETING FRIDAY

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NOTE - Team leaders designated in bold print.

Appendix L

**ANTILLES CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SYSTEM**
**RAMEY SCHOOL**
**SY 1990-91**

**AGENDA - MIDDLE SCHOOL FACULTY MEETING**
**Tuesday, August 28, 1990 - Teachers Center, 2:30PM**

1. Feedback regarding current teaming activities.
2. Status of advisor-advisee program.
3. Suggestions regarding modifications of the warning slip.
4. Particular students of concern to the entire team.
5. Discussion of the behavior progress system and possible Ramey modifications.
6. Future Middle School training.
7. Miscellaneous.

Please bring your class rosters, schedules, and other materials to be shared with the group.

rp

Appendix M

RAMEY SCHOOL

MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to enable our middle school children to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills through active learning experiences, while at the same time providing the basisi to become healthy, socially aware, and responsible aprticipants in our society.

Appendix N

MEETING AGENDA

22 April 1991

From: Principal
To: Middle School Teachers

Subj: MIDDLE SCHOOL MEETING

Date: 15 April 1991

1. I have scheduled a meeting for middle school teachers for Monday, 22 April, at 2:30 in the Teachers' Center, to discuss next year's middle school program. All middle school teachers are asked to attend.

2. Please submit additional agenda items to Ms. Hamilton prior to Monday's meeting.

AGENDA

1. TRANSITION FROM GRADES 5 TO 6 AND GRADES 8 TO 9

2. GOALS OF THE RAP PROGRAM

3. SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST'S SCHEDULE

4. CLOSER FUNCTIONING OF THE 3 TEAMS (6,7, AND 8)

5. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

6. NEXT YEAR'S SCHEDULE

7. MISC.

Appendix O

Proposal from Teachers

From: Core Teams, Ramey Middle School

To: Elaine B. Hinman

Subj: Middle School Counseling /Guidance Services

Recognizing the positive results of our middle school counseling/guidance services and "RAP" initiative - we, the undersigned, respectfully request your review of the enclosed proposal calling for an increase in the number of counseling/contact periods for the middle level counselor.

Joseph Motolenich

Garred Giles

Abraham Aponte

Marge Adams

Linda Taffi

Richard Roettger

Katherine Carl

Appendix P

RAMEY SCHOOL
MIDDLE SCHOOL MEETING

20 AUGUST 91

Introduced Karen Wilson and James Conklin.

Last year's survey indicated a need for Personal Development class (PT class eliminated due to numbers).

New RAP schedule - 4th period each Wednesday.
Question: mix or separate 6, 7, & 8 during RAP?

Parents/students seem satisfied with Middle School.
Students improving in all areas.

7th grade enrollment too large for one class. 1:00 PM meeting in teachers' center - decision about how to divide.

Incentive awards - letter sent home, lunch, break from school, certificate. Team leader will survey staff for (1) most improved, and (2) person who exemplified five attributes.

Homework discipline plan goes home for signature each year. Discussion about dealing with discipline slips. Slips will be returned daily to team leaders. Slips will be hand carried weekly to core meetings.

Probationary Promotions: list will be provided to team leaders so monitoring can be done.

Discussion of changing community/confidence in school. Parents are asking questions, being invited to observe, etc. Harry Wong - call parents (dinnertime) with a positive comment. Make first contact a positive one.

Middle School activities - <u>all</u> students will go unless Dr. Rivet has imposed a prior punishment that prevents it.

Plan to eliminate ineligible list for middle school activities.

Three handbooks have been condensed to one. Students no longer need to cover books.

Request for middle school assembly (4th period). Middle School will have a student government - four officers each. Middle School will select one representative for Educational Leadership Team.

Appendix Q

MIDDLE SCHOOL MEETING MINUTES

10 JANUARY 1992

PRESENT:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| C. Fonseca | J.Villanueva | A. Aponte | N. Rivera |
| K. Carl | S. Conklin | R. Roettger | J. Oter |
| S. Riley | J. Conklin | K. Wilson | |
| M. Weldon | M. Adams | H. Hamilton | |
| L. Taffi | G. Giles | S. Bosques | |

J. Motolenich - Facilitator

Four items discussed

1. Middle School Lunch
   Recommendation: Specific area designated for middle school students after lunch.

2. Open House
   Separate open house for parents to meet and view classrooms.

3. Report Cards
   Revise actual report card content/comments. Desire to have parent conferences for all grade levels.

4. Sports
   Raise eligibility requirements to have students maintain 2.0 grade point average to be eligible to participate in extracurricular activities. (This will be presented to the Educational Leadership Team)

Appendix R

ANTILLES CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SYSTEM

RAMEY SCHOOL

"The Wave of the Future"

From: Principal

To: The Killer Whales Grade 8
The Sting Rays Grade 7
The Great White Sharks Grade 6

Subj: PRINCIPAL'S INCENTIVE LUNCH PROGRAM

Date: 4 SEPTEMBER 1990

Thank you for youe attention during our meeting on Friday. I hope that you enjoyed the break from your studies to visit with your friends and teachers during the "Pop-Up."

At this time I would like to put in writing the details of the "Principal's Incentive Program."

1. Each month the teacher teams will select the student who best exemplifies the following criteria:
an intellectually reflective person (a thinker);
a person enroute to a lifetime of meaningful work (worker);
a good citizen;
a caring and ethical individual; and
a healthy person.

2. The teachet teams will also select one student who has shown the most improvement and growth in either academic or personal development skills.

I will be treating these six individuals to lunch at Pizza Hut during the month.

Appendix S

Sample Letter

30 APR 1991

From: Elaine B. Hinman, Principal
To: Elizabeth Baan

Subj: PRINCIPAL'S INCENTIVE PROGRAM

1. I would like to congratulate you on your selection for the Principal's Incentive Program for the month of March. To be selected by your teachers for this honor is a wonderful compliment. I sincerely enjoyed having lunch with you and I am impressed by your maturity.

2. Thank you and keep up the great work.

ELAINE. B. HINMAN

Copy to:
Teachers
Parents

Attachments

MARP Manager's Broadly Conceived Functions and Responsibilities:

The following were identified at the beginning of the project as the manager's functions and responsibilities important to the MARP: (a) assuring that the Ramey Middle School received a high profile in all aspects of the total school program; (b) commitment to the value of the middle grades program and the ability to share this vision with the staff; (c) providing the staff with the appropriate literature and research findings to enhance their understanding of the program and its value; (d) coordinating meetings, training events, schedules, time tables, bus transportation, and other required organizational management items; (e) securing the funds to provide the necessary training, additional required staff, bus transportation, materials, and additional program requirements; (f) arranging appropriate training through consultants, videos, and local school personnel; (g) informing the staff that there is a commitment by the manager to remain at the school through the development of the middle school program; (h) soliciting the support of the district level leadership; (i) developing, administering, and analyzing data from questionnaires, surveys and other sources; (j) maintaining common planning time in teachers' schedules for teaming; (k) sharing the program's successes with the parents, staff, and students; and (l) keeping the focus of the middle school program on the students and their educational and

developmental needs. After the first year of implementation, all of these factors remain important. The manager believes that the first year of implementation reflected them to be carried out and achieved.

Manager's Leadership Agenda

The leadership dimensions that the manager identified during the Appraising Leadership in Education Study Area (ALE) requiring the most intensive improvement were judgement, political behavior, and problem analysis. During the exercises related to the ALE Study Area, there were several instances when these three dimensions proved to be my weakest areas.

Relating components of the MARP to the larger framework of the entire school's operation was an area in need of monitoring. The balancing of programs for the high school, primary school, and intermediate school along with the emerging importance of the middle level required a great deal of effort. This effort was not always successful. The manager received comments from three students and two teachers about the lack of importance of their activities in comparison to the middle school activities. The other area that reflected this need to relate components to the larger framework came about in dealing with the other two schools. In a small district, comparisons are easily drawn at the expense of cooperation and collegiality.

My desire to be honest and always respond immediately needed to be tempered during the first stage of this

project. This area proved to be a growth area, because I was content to let the teams sort through problems without my interference. This was facilitated by their enthusiasm and forward movement. The middle school teacher teams needed support and encouragement from the manager, while being allowed to make their own decisions. Interference from the manager would have taken away their ownership of the project and its success.

This period of time was one of intense political activity, as the district underwent a major shift in power. I enhanced my sensitivity to the political power structure that exists in the school district and used it to the advantage of the middle school project. I worked with the other principals and supported their efforts. In addition, I maintained a balance between supporting the new Superintendent and my appreciation and respect for the outgoing Director of Educational Programs. This proved to be difficult for me, because I supported school-based management for Ramey School, but had developed strong bonds with the district level instructional team.

In the area of problem analysis, the ALE simulation activities reflected that I needed to ask more questions, gather more data, and take more time with some decisions. Probing and looking at the possible results of my actions were needed to make my MARP leadership stronger. In this area, I think the MARP structure helped me to analyze data more carefully and completely. The error made in scoring

one of the subscales of the Student Satisfaction Survey was caused by my lack of attention to the detail of checking delegated computer entries. Other than this error, problem analysis and data collection have been areas of growth.

Written communication, still not a great strength, was offset during the project by the use of oral communication. I still need to develop the ability to convey my message in a more persuasive, interesting manner. In the past, I have felt my written communications to be inadequate and find I attempt to avoid written communication. This area required my attention during the MARP, and still needs to be developed.

I am creative in my solutions to problems. I do not have a management manual with pat answers. Occasionally, my originality and desire to brainstorm solutions takes too much time and people become weary and want to finish the task in a more standard manner. I do not think this was a problem during the first phase of the project. In fact, the middle school team members felt as if they owned the project, and my creative solutions were utilized to provide what they needed to accomplish the task. This group enjoyed brainstorming and solving problems. They reached consensus easily and always kept the students' interest at the forefront of their decisions.

Sustaining active efforts by becoming fully involved and involving others are strengths. During this project, I was able to motivate most of the team members to actively

join in advancing the project. A challenge for the second phase will be to get the two individuals not fully involved to join in the group effort. It appears that these individuals have developed a "this too shall pass" attitude relating to school improvement. It is my hope that the accreditation team's visit will provide them with an opportunity to become more cognizant of current practices in education.

My training in counseling has enabled me to organize a group and motivate them to reach consensus and accomplish tasks. I often feel let down when individuals express dissatisfaction with the group product. I am too idealistic and expect everyone to be satisfied. I can motivate individuals to do tasks, and my strength is the ability to convey the importance of the task and the individual's value in the process. When I speak, I convey my convictions easily. I am persuasive and sincere. This continued to be a strength during the first phase of the project. My weakness of sometimes speaking too quickly, allowing my thoughts to run ahead of my words, mispronouncing words, not always completing sentences, and becoming redundant did not seem to surface during the project. I did feel disappointed in two or three staff members' lack of involvement with the project. However, this did not reflect on the overall success of the implementation.

The MARP assisted me in addressing several of these

growth areas. The dimensions of judgment and problem analysis required the most concentrated effort during the MARP. Probing for more information and relating all available evidence to the total picture helped avoid the possibility of antagonizing faculty members as I completed the project. Taking time to check myself and reflect on decisions before acting proved critical.